POWER and PRIMACY

A HISTORY OF WESTERN INTERVENTION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC

2023 UPDATED EDITION

A. B. ABRAMS

POWER and PRIMACY

East Asia has been a growing focal point of geopolitical conflict since the 1940s, and today increasingly sits at the heart of the global economy and high tech as rising regional powers challenge the centuries-old primacy of the Western world.

With half a millennium of Western dominated order in the region facing unprecedented challenges and possibly nearing its end, it is now more than ever essential to understand the history behind it and its objectives.

This book undertakes the task of elucidating the complex and little-known history of the West's involvement in the Asia-Pacific, providing context critical to understanding contemporary developments.

A. B. Abrams is the author of "China and America's Tech War from AI to 5G: The Struggle to Shape the Future of World Order" (Rowman) and "Immovable Object: North Korea's 70 Years at War with American Power" (Clarity). He has published widely on international security and geopolitics with a focus on East Asia, and holds related Master's degrees from the University of London.

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A. B. Abrams

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Abbreviations

AFOSI	(United States) Air Force Office of Special Investigations
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIIB	Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank
AMF	Asian Monetary Fund
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIC	Counter Intelligence Corps
CONEFO	Conference of the New Emerging Forces
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
DCPSCS	Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea
EAEC	East Asian Economic Caucus
EAEG	East Asian Economic Group
EAS	East Asia Summit
EU	European Union
GANEFO	Games of New Emerging Forces
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMD	Guomindang
HUK	Hukabalahap (People's Army Against Japan)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KPA	Korean People's Army
KMAG	Korean Military Advisory Group

NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSC	(United States Government's) National Security Council
NYL	Northwest Youth League
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PKI	Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party)
PLA	(Chinese) People's Liberation Army
POW	Prisoner of War
PPC	Provisional People's Committee
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
PRC	People's Republic of China
PVA	People's Volunteer Army
RAA	Recreation and Amusement Association
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
ROK	Republic of Korea
SEATO	South East Asian Treaty Organization
TCDD	2,3,7,8-Tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin
TPP	Trans Pacific Partnership
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
USAMGIK	United States of American Military Government in Korea
US	United States (of America)
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VC	Viet Cong

WIDF Women's International Democratic Federation

WTO World Trade Organization

Introduction

Since the expansion of the Portuguese Empire in the early sixteenth century the dominance of Western empires has been the primary factor shaping regional order in East Asia. By the beginning of the Second World War the entire region outside the Japanese Empire was comprised of territories either subservient to Western interests or, in most cases, under direct Western rule. Much of Indonesia was known as the Dutch East Indies, while Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were known as French Indochina. Malaya, Singapore, Borneo and Hong Kong were among Britain's possessions, alongside Oceania which had been almost entirely depopulated and repopulated with European settlers. Thailand was divided between British and French spheres of influence, while China was long subjected to unequal treaties with and forced to grant extensive territorial concessions to Western powers. The Americans ruled the Philippines and Guam as colonies, as the Portuguese ruled Macau, the Maluku Islands and East Timor, while Germany and Spain had also formerly held colonies of their own. Asian self-determination was thus suppressed by the imposition of Western authority, and the region governed in line with Western interests.

Western empires seeking for centuries to assert military dominance over East Asia consistently depicted their motivations as altruistic, ranging from civilizing missions and spreading the word of God to protecting freedom of trade, democratization and the overthrow of 'Asiatic despots.' When Britain and France waged war against China in the 1850s, British press reported at the time: "Thus it has been the destiny of England to break down a government fabric... to uncover to its own subjects its hollowness and its evils."[1] Other reports from British papers highlighted that the Chinese government's "mysterious and exclusive barbarism" could only be dismantled, for the good of its own people, by "the force of active and intrusive Western Civilization."[2] The language of a moral crusade was used to justify a war fought to ensure that the British Empire would maintain

the rights to sell narcotics to China, and led to possibly the very darkest period in the country's millennia-long history as widespread drug addiction paved the way for Western powers to extract substantial economic, territorial and legal concessions. Altruistic pretexts for centuries masked Western imperial projects across East Asia despite the disastrous impacts they had for local populations, and they remained consistent after the colonial era when 'democratic values' replaced the 'civilising influence' and 'authoritarianism' and 'communism' replaced 'mysterious barbarism.'

Western dominance in East Asia began to be seriously challenged only in the twentieth century when Imperial Japan and the Soviet Union modernized and industrialized their economies, the former from the 1890s and the latter from the 1930s. This ended the Western monopoly on modern industrial and military capabilities. Tokyo and Moscow, both long seen as working towards "the elimination of white influence in the East,"[3] provided arms, ideologies and inspiration key to allowing East Asian peoples to challenge Western empires and strive for independence. Although both were eventually defeated under tremendous Western pressure, a legacy of their efforts was a shift in East Asian order and the emergence from the mid-twentieth century of more independent countries outside Western control capable of opposing Western interests.

This book explores the history of Western intervention in East Asia beginning with the pivotal Japanese challenge to Western control in the 1930s and ending in the twenty-first century when the ability of the United States and its allies to perpetuate their hegemony was brought to serious question. Despite covering a period of over eighty years, an analysis of efforts to sustain Western dominance shows very strong consistencies over time in the means used, the objectives prioritized and the consequences endured by East Asian populations. These are seen across interventions as different as the British, French, American and Dutch military campaigns to re-assert their colonial rule in the mid-late 1940s following Japan's defeat, and the U.S.-led Pivot to Asia initiative in the 2010s, with the central commonality between them being their purpose of sustaining a regional order based on Western control.

Underlying these conflicts is a fundamental clash of visions for the region: Western interests pursuing a framework of international relations under which order is centred on Western dominance, allowing Western powers to influence the affairs of all other states and retain indefinite dominion, versus

regional actors pursuing an order comprised of states equal in their rights to sovereignty including self-defence and self-determination. The latter is the same order enshrined in the United Nations Charter. This essential clash, which largely dates back to the 1940s when the popular slogan 'Asia for the Asiatics' was seen as a fundamental threat to the status quo of Western empire, has continued in various forms ever since from Indonesia and Vietnam's wars of independence to the Sino-U.S. conflict in the twenty-first century.

As U.S. President Barack Obama declared in May 2016 regarding the future the United States intended for the wider Pacific region: "America should write the rules. America should call the shots. Other countries should play by the rules that America and our partners set, and not the other way around."[4] Whether this vision will be attained, and the primary means used by actors on all sides to either sustain Western-dominated order or to end it, is assessed in the following chapters. This book provides background both historical and contemporary key to understanding the nature and goals of major state actors in the ongoing and decades-long conflict for the future of East Asia – the outcome of which will largely determine the future of global order due to the region's central geopolitical and economic importance.

Notes

1 Pagani, Catherine, *Objects and the Press. Images of China in Nineteenth Century Britain* in: Codell, Julie F., *Imperial Co-Histories: National Identities and the British Colonial Press*, Madison, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003 (p. 160). Frankopan, Peter, *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World*, London, Bloomsbury, 2015 (p. 301).

2 *Ibid*.

3 Horne, Gerald, *Race War!: White Supremacy and the Japanese Attack on the British Empire*, New York, New York University Press, 2005 (p. 187).

4 Obama, Barack, 'President Obama: The TPP would let America, not China, lead the way on global trade,' *The Washington Post*, May 2, 2016.

Terms

East Asia: Collective term for East and Southeast Asia.

China: Will from 1949 refer to the Beijing-based *People's Republic of China* rather than the Taipei-based *Republic of China*. The *Republic of China* will from 1949 be referred to as Taiwan.

Northeast Asia: The region encompassing China, the Koreas and Japan.

Southeast Asia: The region encompassing Brunei, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Countries which by 2002 were all members or observers of ASEAN.

Western Bloc: Power bloc of leading Western powers established in the early Cold War and led by the United States and also including Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Portugal. All but Canada, Luxemburg and Norway were major colonial powers, with these three having spent extended periods incorporated into larger European empires.

PART I

Challenging the Colonial Order: Asian Rejection of Western Hegemony from the 1940s

CHAPTER 1

Destroying the Japanese Empire: How Asia's First Industrial Power Undermined Western Control

> Eastern peoples were, for the greater part, still subject to racial instincts and inferiority complexes. The Japanese slogan 'Asia for the Asiatics,' might easily destroy the carefully constructed basis of our cultural synthesis... Japanese injuries and insults to the White population – and these were already being perpetrated by the detestable Asiatic Huns – would irreparably damage white prestige unless severely punished within a short time.[1]
>
> – Pieter Sjoerds Gerbrandy, Dutch Prime Minister

> The success of the Japanese invasion convinced us that there is nothing inherently superior in the Europeans. They could be defeated, they could be reduced to grovelling before an Asian race.
>
> – Malaysian Prime Minister Mahatir Mohammad[2]

> So far and wide have the roots of Japanese victory spread that we cannot now visualize all the fruit it will put forth. The people of the East seem to be waking up from their lethargy.[3]
>
> – Mohandas Ghandi on the impact of Japan's military successes

Imperial Japan: An Outlier in the Western-Dominated Colonial Order

Following the expansion of European empires to impose their rule across most of the world in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the perpetuation of Western global hegemony increasingly came to rely on the imperial powers' effective monopoly of modern industrial economies.

The industrial revolution in the eighteenth century which quickly spread across Western Europe provided economic and military power far superior to those of non-industrialized countries, with the resulting industrial disparity between the Western empires and the rest of the world leaving Western dominance effectively unassailable. This remained the case until the early 20th century when Japan emerged as the first non-Western military industrial power, with profound consequences for East Asia and the wider world.

Japan initiated deep reforms of its society, education and economy which helped facilitate industrialisation largely along Western lines, and did so as a defensive response after the United States Navy forced its opening to trade in 1854 under the Treaty of Kanagawa.[4] Its unique successes came to be widely admired across the non-Western world with states as diverse as Qing China, the first Philippine Republic and the Ottoman Empire looking to the country as a possible model for their own development. Japan's industrial status made it an exception among non-Western countries where underdevelopment and either colonization or vassalage to Western empires were the prevailing norms.

In parallel to industrialization, adoption of Western cultural practices from ballroom dancing to Western clothing was seen as vital to gaining the status of an equal nation under the Western-dominated global order - and to negotiating revisions to its Unequal Treaties with Western powers. The treaties had relegated Japan to the status of an inferior nation alongside the rest of East Asia, granted Western citizens extra territorial rights above the jurisdiction of Japanese courts, and imposed terms of trade strongly favouring Western interests. They were signed with the United States, Britain, France, the Netherlands, Prussia and Spain from 1858 to 1868, and would only be revised decades later.

Under the colonial order of the time empire building conferred a unique prestige, respect and great power status which were all things Japan strove to gain in order to have full equality with the Western powers. The importance of overseas empire to gaining Western respect was perhaps best summarized by renowned historian and philosopher Okakura Kakuzo who wrote: "The average Westerner, in his sleek complacency, will see in the tea-ceremony but another instance of the thousand-and-one oddities

which constitute the quaintness and childishness of the East to him. He was wont to regard Japan as barbarous while she indulged in the gentle arts of peace: he calls her civilized since she began to commit wholesale slaughter on Manchurian battlefields."[5] Japan's armed forces, closely modelled on those of the Western powers from the weapons used and uniforms worn to its command structures, were thus quickly put to use for empire building, and the country's industrialization and military modernization facilitated victories over China in 1894-95, and subsequently over the Russian Empire in 1904-05. Russia was considered a leading Western imperial power at the time with one of the world's largest economies, albeit largely by virtue of its size and with only limited industrial development, and its defeat by a relatively small East Asian country caused shock that reverberated across the West and beyond.

Since the sixteenth century when Western empires began to expand into East Asia widespread portrayals and perceptions among Westerners of Asiatic races and civilizations as inferiors profoundly influenced the Asian regional order. The unprecedented defeat of a Christian and ethnically predominantly European nation provided Japan with unparalleled prestige across the non-Western world, but also led Western populations to increasingly perceive Japanese power as a potential threat. Fears of a 'Yellow Peril' – under which Japan would lead East Asia to end centuries of Western hegemony – were widely used by European scholars and political leaders to encourage a heavier hand and more interventionist policies in the region. Such calls frequently emphasized the need for a complete subjugation and partitioning of the region's largest country China to eliminate the potential for an Asian power bloc forming that could challenge Western primacy.[6]

With the United States having recently colonized the Philippines in part to provide a staging ground for power projection to draw China into its sphere of influence,[7] Japan's newfound power and potential to challenge such designs sparked concern in Washington. U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt thus requested that the Navy draft plans to fight Japan if necessary. These plans evolved considerably over time, stipulating in 1906 the United States enforce "final and complete commercial isolation," and later emphasizing "impoverishment and exhaustion" and "in the end... economic

ruin." Bombing of industry and transportation came to form a central role in these plans as technological development facilitated such options.[8]

As its population grew increasingly affluent, Japan's intellectual and political elite increasingly perceived the plight of their neighbours across the region subjugated by Western empires empathetically. This fuelled the emergence of a pan-Asian nationalist ideology as calls grew for support to be given to other Asian nations to strive for the same independence and modernization that Japan itself enjoyed. One of the most prominent pan-Asian thinkers was Duke Konoe Atsumaro who established the East Asian Common Culture Society and sought to support China's economic development through mutually beneficial education and cultural ties. He played a central role in the emergence of pan-Asian thought at the turn of the century, although European occupation of almost all neighbouring countries and instability in China meant early efforts were met with only limited success.

The Kyoto School, founded by philosopher Kitaro Nishida and supported by many renowned associated historians such as Naito Konan, emerged as the leading centre of pan-Asian thought. Seeking to challenge the West's Eurocentric historical narratives and definitions of modernity, the Kyoto School constructed a Sinocentric East Asian region as a historical universe with unique dynamics of modernity. Its scholars sought to determine the social and cultural characteristics of an 'East Asian modern age,' and to define modernity themselves – competing with rather than acquiescing to Western definitions which tied westernization inextricably with modernization. This was seen as critical for the region's future. As Chinese civilization long predated that of Japan, and with Chinese thought and history having profoundly influenced Japan over centuries, placing China at the centre of pan-Asian narratives was seen as a natural choice.[9] With China itself at the time in a state of chaos as part of its 'century of humiliation' that followed the Opium Wars, many in Japan perceived their own country as better able to carry forward its civilisation legacy.

Pan-Asian thinkers advocated intra-regional co-operation to end subjugation to extra-regional Western powers which had been ongoing for over three centuries. Leading pan-Asian figure Naniwa Kawashima described common perceptions of Japan's responsibility as the only modern

and free East Asian country: "We will liberate various Asian peoples from their enslaved state, placing them under the management of first-class national governments. Rallying them all into a unified bloc, we will free them from the unjust, aggressive chokehold... we will curb the unjust, inhumane, thoroughly evil actions, which have been undertaken by the Europeans."[10]

Pan-Asian thought deeply influenced both individuals and the Japanese government itself to support various anti-colonial movements throughout the region. In Indonesia nationalists were sponsored to visit Japan and discuss the future of their country's independence after centuries of Dutch and British occupation.[11] Notable individuals included Captain Hara Tei of the Imperial Army who ended his service to fight alongside the First Philippine Republic against an American invasion in 1899, and Yoshida Yamada who, after working for the School of Sino-Japanese Trade Study in Shanghai, joined Sun Yat-sen's anti-imperialist revolutionary movement in China and was lost in action.[12] Many Japanese educators such as Kawahara Misako also endured considerable hardship to teach a new generation of Chinese leadership throughout the country at the behest of the Chinese government, aiming to support China's emergence as a modern economic partner.[13]

Philosopher and scholar Kiyoshi Miki, a prominent member of the Kyoto School and esteemed student of its founder Kitaro Nishida, had first conceptualized an Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere of interdependent economies under which the wider region would follow Japan to modernize and gain freedom from Western domination. Miki had developed a substantial influence over Japanese workers' movement and engaged closely with Marxist thought, but saw the path to freedom for all East Asian peoples being through Japanese solidarity and support. The idea of a Co-Prosperity Sphere built on the concept the New Order in East Asia, an idea of Atsumaro Konoe's son Prince Fumimaro Konoe, although this previous design had been limited to Northeast Asia alone. While the idea of a Co-Prosperity Sphere was officially adopted,[14] Miki himself would strongly disapprove of the methods used to bring about its creation – namely the imperialistic tendencies which emerged in Japanese conduct towards other East Asian peoples who they were supposedly emancipating. While to some the idea of liberating East Asia held strong appeal, to others

allegiances lay not in pan-Asian solidarity but in Japanese interests alone – with the Co-Prosperity Sphere and liberation being convenient pretexts for an imperial project.

Kawashima emphasized the dangers of the Japanese perceiving themselves as a conquerors rather than liberators in the region, stating: "Our military authorities now stationed in Manchuria must ease up on the excessively interventionist approach they have assumed in the affairs of Manchukuo and restore cooperation as the operating mode in Japanese-Manchurian relations." He warned: "If in our zeal to capitalize on patriotic passions to effect an immediate territorial settlement we turn our backs on the enduring ideals of Imperial Japan and do nothing more than re-enact the evil deeds of the European and American powers, there will be repercussions. We will not see the day when we can make definitely clear to Asians and other peoples of the world Japan's true spirit and gain their heartfelt allegiance and trust."[15]

Thus although many in the Japanese elite and political leadership continued to emphasize fraternity and solidarity against Western empire, others increasingly emulated Western conduct and adopted similar paradigms for viewing other Asian peoples to those through which Europeans had for centuries viewed the non-Western world. Pan-Asianism and Japanese supremacism resulted in sharply contrasting conduct towards local populations, the former winning Japan support across Asia and the latter, which emerged later on, alienating it.[16] Strong divisions between the two paradigms for viewing Japan's place in the region remained until the country's final defeat, which explained the discrepancy in conduct towards East Asian populations under different commanders in the Imperial Army.

In its modernization Japan learned from Western medicine, arts, industry but also thought and paradigms for viewing the world and European theories of racial superiority. Germany in particular, as a country which like Japan was a latecomer to modern industry and had little empire to enrich it, was seen by many in Japan from the early twentieth century as a model. When Germany, alongside Belgium, France, Britain, Italy and others committed holocausts and genocides in Africa, the wealth of which played a vital role in enriching Europe, this too was observed. In southern Africa German forces exterminated the indigenous peoples,[17] with imperial

authorities condoning widespread sexual violence against African women.[18] In German occupied Namibia sexual slavery was widespread and much of the male population were massacred as land fell under German control.[19] Africans were also shipped to Europe for experimentation to prove European racial superiority, with medical experiments on live prisoners carried out on a considerable scale.[20]

Such atrocities were common to all European empires, and appeared to be an inherent part of the colonial projects which enriched the West at the expense of the world. British imperial forces, for example, committed acts of genocide in Australia and according to a British Central Independent Television report, "hunted and raped and massacred, and few doubted at the time that genocide was the official policy." Babies' heads were kicked off in contests between colonizers, who raped and sexually tortured women to death, commonly "by sticking sharp things like spears up their vaginas until they died." Native men were commonly castrated and left to die.[21] In East Asia the Bandanese Massacre carried out by the Dutch Empire[22] and the conduct of U.S. forces during the conquest of the Philippines,[23] (see Chapters 4 and 5) were further examples of Western atrocities widely termed acts of genocide. It was in this manner that the populations and civilizations of three of the world's six inhabited continents were effectively erased by European conquest – those of the Americas and Oceania – which were repopulated by European settlers. So long as the West served as a model for Japan's rise to gain great power status, it boded ill for the country's wartime conduct.

During the Russo-Japanese War and First World War Japanese forces conducted themselves with distinction, with conduct towards prisoners making a very strong impression on Russian medical officers in particular. Japanese authorities were described as having "bent over backwards to accommodate the large appetites of the Russian prisoners by providing a much larger budget of sixty sen per day for officers, and thirty sen per day for the lower ranks, as opposed to the figure of seventeen sen normally allocated for the Japanese lower ranks." This meant Russian prisoners were better fed that Japanese soldiers themselves at Tokyo's expense, all while Japanese prisoners and wounded in Russian hands were not only mistreated but often slaughtered. The Japanese where thus referred to as "one

sided humanitarians," with the Russian Red Cross among other sources reporting excellent treatment and provision of medical attention.[24] Cassell's History of the Russo-Japanese War 1904-5 thus observed: "In concluding this article [on the treatment of prisoners of war] one cannot refrain from paying a tribute to Japan for the way in which she has observed the rules of International Law in her present conflict, her chivalrous treatment of her wounded and prisoner enemies, and her strict compliance with all the laws and uses of neutrality."[25] In their co-occupation of Beijing alongside Western nations in 1900 Japanese forces were unanimously seen to conduct themselves to a far higher standard, with British and American sources stressing the contrast between the restraint of Japanese soldiers far from the excesses and "splendid looting" of the Western nations.[26]

It was only from the late 1930s that Japanese forces began to commit considerable atrocities, albeit ones still falling far short of those of the European powers. Having suffered from successive economic downturns, and faced with a fast-growing population and highly limited resources in the early 1930s, the Japanese leadership saw the need for a larger empire of their own to emulate those of the West which had for so long empowered and supported high living standards in Europe. Japanese atrocities primarily against Chinese civilians, which included human experimentation, sexual torture and mass rapes, closely resembled the prior conduct of the Western empires that had been committed in all corners of the non-Western world for centuries on a much larger scale. While Western influence did not extol Japan of responsibility for its crimes, nor did it necessarily mean war crimes would not have been committed otherwise, it was always an important factor in the way Japan conducted itself with war crimes being no exception. The severity of the crimes committed and the techniques used both to dehumanize the enemy and to torture civilians, particularly women, closely mirrored those long used by the Western empires. These influences and the pressure exerted on Japan for over a century to conduct itself as Western powers did to gain recognition as a civilized equal, which led to the remaking of the country, were largely responsible for Japanese atrocities when they did occur.

Perhaps most significant discrepancy setting Japanese conduct towards its overseas imperial subjects apart from the Western empires was

its very considerable investment in improving their economic output and raising living standards. This contrasted sharply with the 'development of underdevelopment' pursued by Western powers that resulted in growing impoverishment, reduced literacy rates and continued heavy dependence on industry in Europe and North America as colonies were relegated to an indefinite state of backwardness. Japanese controlled territories saw extensive industrialization and infrastructure development such as in Taiwan, where agricultural development was also substantial,[27] and in northern Korea. Korean economic output increased tenfold in thirty years of Japanese rule, with the second largest dam in the world the Sui Ho being part of a widespread hydroelectric network that provided power to major industrial projects.[28] Japanese-occupied Manchuria, which previously had negligible industry, saw manufacturing so heavily concentrated there that it exceeded the steel output of Japan itself, with an industrial base far exceeding that of the remainder of China. The discrepancy in industrial development between Japanese and Western controlled territories in East Asia was thus tremendous.

Japan's industrialization of the wider East Asian region posed an imminent threat to Western interests, threatening to undermine the longstanding cornerstone of Western primacy by ending the vast disparity between the industrialized West and the underdeveloped non-Western world. The possibility that Japan would expand its empire further into China and Southeast Asia threatened not only to reduce its reliance on imports of key industrial inputs such as oil and rubber from Western controlled territories, but also raised the possibility of it rapidly modernizing economies across the region as it had Manchuria, Korea and Taiwan. Small and resource poor Japan had alone been able to challenge leading Western powers economically and militarily, and had it implemented an industrialization and modernization program across East Asia the military and economic clout of a resulting Japanese led Asian power bloc would pose an unacceptable challenge to Western primacy. While the Manchurians, Koreans and other subjects were not the primary beneficiaries of this industrial development, the modernization and industrialisation of East Asia under a united Asian-led empire was an imminent threat to the West's position.

Japan Challenges Western Power

In September 1940 Japan invaded French-occupied Vietnam and ended the over half a century of colonial rule. Although France was if anything considered their adversary at the time, the other leading Western empires in the region Britain, the United States and the Netherlands nevertheless deemed it unacceptable for an East Asian power to end Western rule over a colonial possession. Signs that the Japanese proposed Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere was beginning to materialize threatened to make continued Western regional dominance untenable.

As well as its potential to modernize and unite regional economies, Japan also challenged the military primacy Western empires had maintained in the region for centuries. Tokyo had withdrawn from the American and British drafted Washington Naval Treaty and London Naval Treaty in 1934 and 1935, the terms of which had helped ensure the perpetuation Western maritime dominance. The Washington Treaty stipulated that the United States Navy had to equal the Japanese Navy by a ratio of at least 10:7.[29] The London treaty meanwhile restricted the Japanese Navy to twelve heavy cruisers, where the United States and Britain were permitted eighteen and fifteen, respectively. Similar restrictions were placed on other warship types, with the combined tonnage of Japan's light cruiser fleet restricted to 100,450 tons where Britain and the United States were permitted fleets of over 335,00 tons between them.[30] Preceding its withdrawal Japan had focused on compensating for quantitative restrictions with qualitative advantages, developing better trained crews and technologically superior carrier aircraft, battleships and submarines. By the 1930s its armed forces and defence industry had become among the most advanced and capable in the world.[31]

American officials and financial experts had long expected that Japan would quickly bankrupt itself in its war with China, which was receiving considerable Western material support, and it was only in late 1940 that the true magnitude of Japan's reserves became known prompting a greater sense of urgency in Washington to cripple the Japanese economy.[32] With centuries of Western-led order in the region threatened by Japan's expansion,

the United States moved in July 1941 to freeze all the country's laboriously accumulated international reserves and impose a full oil embargo. Japanese owned dollars in foreign countries were also paralysed.[33] As noted in the Naval Institute Press publication *Bankrupting Japan*, the U.S. engaged in nothing less than "full-blooded financial warfare against Japan."[34] With forcing down Japanese living standards being a specific goal, a "zeal for economic warfare prompted investigations of Japan's imports of food, clothing, and shelter materials on the premise that in total war, even of the economic variety, no moral distinction need be drawn between soldiers and civilians." Some measures included targeting food supplies by restricting sales of nitrogen used in fertiliser, and targeting of Japan's potassium imports much needed for agriculture.[35] Efforts were described by officials as deploying "all our economic potency" against Japan, "driving straight at the heart of the enemy's internal living and his fighting power."[36]

Further embargoes by Western Allied powers cut off 90 percent of Japan's oil supplies, and under the United States' Export Control Act steel exports to Japan were also banned. Cutting oil supplies was widely seen by the United States leadership to be a guarantee that war would break out, and with embargoes threatening to bring industry across Japan, Korea and Manchuria to a halt, the leadership in Tokyo perceived military action as a necessary measure to ensure the country's survival. The primary objective of these actions would be to seize oil and rubber producing territories in Southeast Asia from British and Dutch control, which necessitated preemptive strikes on their military facilities as well as those of the United States. Chief of the U.S. Naval War Plans Division Admiral Richmond Kelley Turner had thus predicted an oil embargo would force Japan to attack British Borneo, Malaya and the Dutch East Indies to seize their oil fields, stressing that a total embargo should be avoided if Washington sought to avoid war.[37]

As early as 1935, U.S. ambassador to Japan Joseph Grew has stressed that early American efforts to strangle the Japanese economy would likely lead to war. He cabled the secretary of state in Washington emphasizing that Japan needed to be given "economic elbow-room," or American pressure would force Tokyo to carve out an economic empire of its own by force. As *Foreign Policy* observed eighty-five years later, however, "Washington

was in the grip of economic nationalists" who instead ramped up pressure culminating in the 1941 embargoes and paving the way to war.[38] The *Eight Action Memo* U.S. intelligence report on the Second World War from October 7, 1940, strongly indicated that the intention of Washington's policies at the time was to provoke Japan into committing an "overt act of war." The memo stated that while American public opinion would not support a war of aggression, provoking Japan into initiating hostilities could achieve the same ends. It read: "It is not believed that in the present state of political opinion the United States government is capable of declaring war against Japan without more ado... If by [the eight- point plan] Japan could be led to commit an overt act of war, so much the better." Central to these provocations were the oil embargo and other forms of economic warfare against Japan.[39]

Japanese policy, including limitations on its alliance with Germany, were for years shaped largely by the need to avoid provoking Britain and the United States for fear that they would cease supplies of raw materials.[40] In September 1941, in an attempt to secure a lifting of the economic measures against it, Tokyo ordered its ambassador in Washington Nomura Kichisaburo to commence negotiations with U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull. While Japan was willing to withdraw from Vietnam, Washington made additional demands for a full withdrawal from China to the advantage of the Western-aligned government there. With Japan having fought for four years to make gains in China at considerable cost, these new demands predictably effectively ruled out the possibility of a peaceful settlement and increased significantly the possibility that Japan would make war on the U.S. – as the *Eight Action Memo* indicated was Washington's intention. It was only after this that policymakers in Tokyo decided that an occupation of the British and Dutch colonies in Southeast Asia was imperative, as these represented the only source of oil within the reach of Japan's armed forces which could sustain its industry.[41] The expectation that the United States would intervene on behalf of the two European empires, however, meant neutralizing the U.S. Navy also needed to be factored into such plans.

As early as May 1941 the British Ministry of Economic Warfare, its service departments and the Shell Oil Company had all concluded that should an oil embargo be imposed, Japan's reserves would be exhausted

within a year unless it obtained control over the Dutch East Indies.[42] The Joint Planning Subcommittee concluded that the oil embargo and freezing orders may have increased the possibility of war.[43] On the eve of the outbreak of hostilities, the Ministry of Economic Warfare predicted that Western economic attacks were forcing Japan into "an economic situation as to render her ultimately unable to wage war, and reduce her to the status of second-rate power."[44] Thus while Japan had sought to avoid conflict with the Western empires, Western policymakers were well aware that their decisions were forcing Japan into one.

Japan's campaign against the Western empires began in December 1941 with attacks on U.S. naval facilities at Pearl Harbor. While this strike was far from successful, other Japanese offensives proved unstoppable with the country winning every major battle for the first six months of the war and effectively driving British, Australian, Dutch and American forces out of the Western Pacific. From the battles of Guam and Wake Island, Bataan and Corregidor in the American-occupied Philippines, to taking British-occupied Hong Kong and Singapore, and battles from Borneo to Java in Dutch-ruled Indonesia to name but a few, the Japanese won victory after victory against Western military forces.

For the Western powers conspicuous defeats observed by the entire world and the hands of an Asiatic country were seen as a great humiliation. The seldom challenged belief in European racial and civilization superiority had been at the heart of the Western worldview for centuries. As British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had several times reiterated, summarizing the prevailing consensus across the Western world: "The Aryan stock is bound to triumph."[45] This deep set belief had been so suddenly challenged with the swift destruction of the Western empires' armies and sinking of their navies by the first and only industrialized East Asian country which had singlehandedly defeated all of them against considerable odds.

Western assessments of Japanese strength had long been strongly influenced by racial biases presuming the supremacy of ethnically European forces,[46] which remained widespread preceding and into the war.[47] British Naval officers, for example, concluded that because of their Asiatic eye shape Japanese pilots could not shoot straight, while the General Staff at the War Office minuted, when forwarding a report claiming the Japanese military

had a poor fighting spirit: "After all, the Japanese are Orientals!" as the explanation.[48] As leading expert on British-Japanese conflict Douglas Ford observed there prevailed "a widespread ethnocentric view which blindly credited the efficacy of Western armies... it was common practice to rely on racist views which downplayed the quality of non-Western powers."[49] He highlighted that British forces specifically suffered "trauma arising from Japan's victories in Southeast Asia during 1941–1942" which sharply contradicted prior perceptions, stressing that "the efficiency of the Japanese naval air services ranked first among the maritime powers."[50]

The Japanese victories' shaking of the Western worldview was perhaps best summarized by Professor Angus Calder's account of the British defeat in Singapore, which had been the country's leading overseas military site and the centre of British Empire's control over East Asia, Oceania and the vital South Asian colonies. More personnel had been stationed there than in Britain itself in peacetime. Calder wrote:

> *Most British officials, soldiers, planters and businessmen in Asia had underestimated Asiatic peoples in general. Their racialist contempt for 'little yellow men,' against whom their clubs maintained a colour bar, was unlikely to foster loyalty to the British Empire among Chinese and Malay subjects. Their power depended not on their subjects' love, but ultimately on the Royal Navy. Whites had faith in the great Singapore naval base... It symbolized the UK's will to remain a great power in the East and to guarantee the safety of kith and kin in Australia and New Zealand... British behaviour in Penang [in northwest Malaya] was symptomatic. Even after the Japanese, on Pearl Harbor day, invaded the Malayan Peninsula, British inhabitants complacently flocked to the bar of the Eastern Oriental Hotel. But soon air raids brought terror and chaos. Whites – and whites only – were evacuated in haste. Almost all British officials, doctors and nurses withdrew, leaving Malay and Indian subordinates to make terms with conquerors and serve the sick.* [51]

Calder subsequently concluded:

> *Next day the commanding officer, General Arthur F. Percival, surrendered. The largest army ever assembled by Britain in the Far East, 130,000 British, Empire and Commonwealth troops, became prisoners of war of 50,000 'little yellow men'... the façade of Western imperialism had been blown away like balsa wood. A high U.S. official had recently warned that if Singapore fell it would 'lower immeasurably the prestige among Eastern peoples of the 'white race,' and particularly of the British Empire and the United States.' So it proved.* [52]

Prime Minister Winston Churchill described Singapore's capture as "the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history," although the incident was far from isolated with similar victories being gained by Japanese forces across the region.[53]

The British Army in the Far East soon formed the prevailing opinion that their own tactical skill and discipline were no match for the Japanese adversary, [54] with the War Office highlighting that Japanese forces were capable of overcoming any natural obstacle.[55] British intelligence emphasized the superiority of Japanese naval gunners and armaments,[56] with British vessels, despite being equipped to the most up to date standard, seen to need extensive modernization before they could engage their opponents.[57] During night-time engagements in particular, Japanese forces benefitted from being trained for combat under darkness where their adversaries very often were not.[58] British intelligence heaped praise on Japanese combat aircraft and their pilots, most notably the carrier-based Zero fighter,[59] with no British aircraft with comparable performance to the Zero expected to emerge for some time.[60] Japanese pilots were considered very highly trained by their adversaries,[61] with the Air Ministry propagating an account of U.S. encounters in Guadalcanal that American aircraft "could not stay with [the Zero] at all and dog fight at any altitude."[62] British assessments were similarly highly impressed by the performance of Japanese torpedo bombers and their very high levels of training.[63] The Captain of carrier *HMS Hermes*, for example, highlighted that Japanese strikes were carried out "perfectly, relentlessly and quite fearlessly,"[64] with Japan's military tactics overall described by veterans as "excellent."[65] Extremely high morale was also highlighted as a key factor allowing Japanese forces to uphold the momentum of their advances, and often contrasted strongly with their deflated Western adversaries.[66]

Japan's overwhelming military victories marked a major turning point in East Asia's history that not only shook the West's certainty in its superiority, but also challenged prevailing perceptions of the West by subjugated peoples across the region conditioned by centuries of colonial rule to perceive ethnic Europeans as unchallengeable. Japan's 1905 victory against Russia had previously inspired those under European imperial rule throughout the region and beyond, showing that Asiatic soldiers and sailors

could win tremendous victories over ethnic Europeans. From Vietnam to as far as India, this first Japanese triumph was celebrated by nationalists.[67] As Indian political analyst Pankaj Mishra had noted: "For the first time since the middle ages, a non-European country had vanquished a European power in a major war. And Japan's victory sparked a hundred fantasies – of national freedom, racial dignity, or simple vengefulness – in the minds of those who had sullenly endured European authority over their lands."[68] Mohandas Ghandi, later to become India's renowned independence leader, observed regarding the profound psychological impact Japan's successes had: "So far and wide have the roots of Japanese victory spread that we cannot now visualize all the fruit it will put forth. The people of the East seem to be waking up from their lethargy."[69]

By sweeping European empires out East Asia, where they had in many cases been entrenched for over 300 years, Japan made an even greater impression on the region's populations than it did on its adversaries. Leading scholar of Japanese history John Dower referred to Japan's success in "forever destroying the myth of white omnipotence," which had been a key facilitator of Western imperial rule.[70] Challenging the idea that the rule of ethnic Europeans over East Asia was a natural order justified by unquestionable Western supremacy was met with much apprehension among Western leaders. Dutch Prime Minister Pieter Gerbrandy stressed in a meeting with Winston Churchill and others the need for immediate retaliation primarily because Japan threatened to undo the work of centuries of European imperialism by undermining the image of Western supremacy. He stated:

> *Eastern peoples were, for the greater part, still subject to racial instincts and inferiority complexes. The Japanese slogan 'Asia for the Asiatics,' might easily destroy the carefully constructed basis of our cultural synthesis... Though a lengthy Japanese occupation of important parts of the Pacific Territories might not necessarily turn the final victory of the Western powers into virtual defeat, it would at least prove a formidable obstacle to a real peace in the Far East. Japanese injuries and insults to the White population – and these were already being perpetrated by the detestable Asiatic Huns – would irreparably damage white prestige unless severely punished within a short time.*[71]

Gerbrandy's fears were shared by German leader Adolf Hitler. While Germany was then in an alliance of convenience with Japan, its Nazi leadership was notably distressed by the rapid victories of their Asian ally

over their European adversaries for fear that the prestige and supremacy of the Western races and empires be undermined.[72] While the punishment Gerbrandy had called for would come swiftly and terribly for the Japanese population, the psychological impacts of Japan's victories were nonetheless lasting and substantial. As Oxford University Professor Eri Hotta concluded: "Southeast Asia stood at the point of no return after the Japanese occupation." She and other scholars attributed the subsequent independence of Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Cambodia and Myanmar to the psychological impact that Japanese victories over Western empires had had. While Japan was eventually defeated, it had itself defeated the idea of European supremacy and so delegitimized Western imperialism in the eyes of the Asian peoples.[73]

Mahatir Mohammad, who later became Malaysia's fourth and longest serving prime minister, recalled Japan's victories "changed our view of the world," highlighting that there was truth to the argument that Tokyo's imperial project was partly a war of liberation despite the abuses its forces committed. "The success of the Japanese invasion convinced us that there is nothing inherently superior in the Europeans. They could be defeated, they could be reduced to grovelling before an Asian race," Mahatir stated.[74]

Lee Kuan Yew, who became the founding father of an independent Singapore, recalled to similar effect decades later regarding the psychological impact Japanese victories had:

> *My colleagues and I are of the generation of young men who went through the Second World War and the Japanese Occupation and emerged determined that no one – neither the Japanese nor the British – had the right to push and kick us around. We are determined that we could govern ourselves and bring out children in a country where we can be proud to be self-representing people. When the war came to an end in 1945, there was never a chance of the old type of British colonial system ever being re-created. The scales had fallen from our eyes and we saw for ourselves that the local people could run the country.*[75]

Lee emphasized that Japanese victories had "smashed" the image of European racial superiority, stressing that "stories of their scramble to save their skins led the Asiatics to see them as selfish and cowardly."[76] This was true across Southeast Asia, and several countries owed their independence largely to the legacy of the Japanese Empire. Even in China

which was then at war with Japan, as writer Han Suyin observed, Japan's successes at Pearl Harbor "made the [Chinese] officers almost delirious with pleasure… because Japan had delivered a big blow to White Power."[77] Clifford Matthews, born in Hong Kong but of European origin, stressed that he "could see it was the end of… imperialism in the Far East. They [had] seen the foreigners being humiliated. Some of us picking up cigarette [butts] which were thrown down by the Japanese sentry. Even there… I saw [that] obviously this was the end of the whole superior attitude… [the Chinese] could see that we were nothing special, we were just human beings. [What] was clear to me [was] that there will be another world after the war."[78]

Japan and the United States at War

Japan's initial military successes against Western powers were to be short lived, with its assets stretched between a major war with U.S.-aligned China, which although poorly led was heavily armed and had a much larger economy than Japan, as well as major European, North American and Oceanic military powers. Only a fraction of Japanese manpower could be committed to countering the Western powers, with the bulk of its forces tied up in China and further units deployed defensively bordering Soviet Siberia.[79] The drain on Japan's economy and commitment of the bulk of its resources to war in China was assessed by Western intelligence agencies to have made military action in additional theatres highly unfavourable for Tokyo – meaning it would be pursued only if the country was left no other choice.[80] British intelligence in 1939 highlighted that prolonging Sino-Japanese hostilities was vital to weakening Japan's ability to challenge Western power in the region, and after war with the Western empires did break out the ongoing nature of the Sino-Japanese War significantly benefitted the Western position.[81]

The United States alone had 450 percent the labour force and twenty times the industrial capacity of Japan, although the Japanese economy was significantly more militarized to partly compensate.[82] The training of

Japan's naval personnel and initially the quality of its armaments provided its forces with a strong advantage in the war's first year. Leading authority on military sociology and military bureaucratic politics Roger Thompson, who served for years in the U.S. Navy, attributed Japan's defeat in several pivotal battles such as Midway to "plain old dumb luck." He made a strong case that despite Japan's relatively limited industrial base its considerable technological superiority in several key fields and the better training and preparedness of its navy, particularly its aircraft carrier groups, heavily compensated for its numerical and resource disadvantages. This had been demonstrated by Japanese victories against both China and Western powers in the face of very significant material disadvantages.[83]

Japan's severe material disadvantages meant it only pursued war with the Western empires when cut off from its resources by their embargoes, which had otherwise made its economic and military collapse inevitable. Only 18 percent of its forces could be spared for war in the Pacific against the combined forces of the Western powers, with the 82 percent spread between the Japanese mainland, Manchuria, Korea and China.[84] Chinese forces alone on paper outnumbered the Japanese almost five to one,[85] with the country's endemic corruption, low morale and lack of effective military planning being key to Japan's victories (see Chapter 3). To defeat both China and the combined forces of the Western powers simultaneously was not to ask a miracle of the Japanese military, but to ask for two miracles at once – two simultaneous victories each against tremendous odds.

Central to Japan's war plans was destroying the U.S. Navy's aircraft carriers in a first strike to cripple its power projection capabilities, which the attack on Pearl Harbour failed to achieve as the carriers were at sea at the time. American battleships left within range were all near obsolete First World War-era ships the loss of which had relatively little impact on its ability to wage war. Japan's lack of resources and smaller industrial capacity meant that even victories were often insufficient to ensure the war would be won. A notable example was the Battle of Sana Cruz in October 1942 when the Japanese Navy won decisively and inflicted heavy losses on the U.S. Navy, but itself suffered moderate losses including damage to two of its aircraft carriers. As a result Imperial Navy Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, observing Japan's overwhelming material disadvantages in the wider war,

noted after the battle: "The battle was a tactical win, but a shattering strategic loss to Japan. Considering the great superiority of our enemy's industrial capacity, we must win every battle overwhelmingly in order to win this war. This last one, although a victory, was not an overwhelming victory."[86]

With the large majority of the region and the world under the control of Western empires, compensating for Japan's much more limited resource and industrial bases proved effectively impossible. At a time when Japan had yet to suffer a single major battlefield loss, U.S. Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Harold Stark had predicted based on its material disadvantages alone: "You [Japan] will not only be unable to make up your losses but you will grow weaker as time goes on... we will not only make up our losses but will grow stronger as time goes on. It is inevitable that we shall crush you before we are through with you."[87]

The retribution of the Western powers against an East Asian nation which had challenged their rule over its region was great indeed. Calls for a harsh response exceeded anything widely expressed towards Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy or other European Axis powers in their ferocity, and the war against Japan would very quickly come to be seen as a race war against the 'Yellow Menace.' John A. Wahlquist, a faculty member in the School of Intelligence Studies at the National Defence Intelligence College, James A. Stone, a military Special Agent with the U.S. Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) and David P. Shoemaker, a civilian Special Agent with AFOSI, co-published a study regarding American military conduct during the war. They concluded that conduct was strongly influenced by the fact that U.S. forces were fighting an Asian power, which was seen as a threat to Western global primacy, civilization and supremacy. They wrote: "Conflict in Asia differed greatly from that in Europe, for Japan was considered to be a 'racial menace' as well as a cultural and religious one. If Japan proved victorious in the Pacific, there would be 'perpetual war between the Oriental ideas and the Occidental.' At the time, the conflict was perceived as a clash of civilizations."[88]

The harshness of Western retribution against Japan, with conduct considerably more brutal than in any other theatre of the Second World War, was consistent with of a long history of similar conduct towards East Asian actors which opposed Western dominance of their region. The

Japanese were portrayed and widely viewed as a subhuman race over which Western supremacy had to be asserted, with dehumanization and demonization fuelling hatred and atrocities. The Japanese were depicted in state sponsored art in the United States as all manner of creatures, ranging from cockroaches and monkeys to venomous snakes and vampire bats, with all associated with small stature and biting danger. An official film by the U.S. Navy described the Japanese soldiers as "living snarling rats," and wartime propaganda scripts showing Japan's population deceived by evil ideology and militaristic leaders, as Nazi Germany was commonly depicted, were not approved. Unlike European adversaries, in Japan's case the entire population was target for extreme vilification and dehumanization rather than its political ideology or leadership.[89]

Respected Western magazines such as *Science Digest* and *Time* published articles examining whether and how the Japanese were racially inferior to ethnic Europeans. President Roosevelt himself commissioned a study of the scientific evidence of the inferiority of Asiatic races including but not limited to the Japanese. *Science Digest* even ran an article titled: *Why Americans Hate Japs More than Nazis*. Australian historian Paul Ham observed that Hollywood never cast a good Japanese, but often a good German. The Germans were considered enemies for ideological reasons, while hatred for the Japanese was motivated by race. Ham noted: "To the press this was a racial war in all but name... The Germans were [considered] a bit 'like us', if deceived by an evil doctrine," whereas the Japanese were considered racially and irredeemably evil.[90] The forcible internment of approximately 120,000 American and 22,000 Canadian citizens of Japanese origin into concentration camps without charge, where no remotely similar measures were taken against citizens of Italian or German origin, was a consequence which exemplified this phenomenon.[91]

The dehumanization of the Japanese was reinforced with inducements to show no mercy in combat. Commander of U.S. military operations in the South Pacific Admiral William Halsey, for example, urged his men: "Kill Japs! Kill Japs! Kill more Japs! Remember Pearl Harbor – keep 'em dying!"[92] A Marine colonel ordered his men: "You will take no prisoners, you will kill every yellow son-of-a-bitch, and that's it."[93] Australian General Sir Thomas Blamey told Australian troops under his command

in 1943: "Your enemy is a curious race – a cross between the human being and the ape... he is inferior to you... and that knowledge will help you to victory.... We must go on to the end if civilization is to survive. We must exterminate the Japanese." Soon after, in an interview with the *New York Times*, Blamey opined that the Western world was "not dealing with human beings as we know them. We are dealing with something primitive. Our troops have the right view of the Japs. They regard them as vermin." He referred to them as "these things."[94]

Professor Jesse Glenn Gray, a veteran of the war against Japan and expert on the psychology of men at war, noted regarding the prevalent dehumanization of the Japanese: "On first reflection, the enemy conceived as beasts might be thought to be morally the most satisfactory of any image, since it avoids feelings of guilt. Granted the fact of war, the pursuit of killing without compunction could be considered the most healthy and rational."[95] Dehumanization and hatred directed not at the country's military, its ideology or even its soldiers, but at the country's race and civilization, was key to facilitating atrocities and the targeting and abuse of both Japanese and other East Asian civilians. Historian Peter Schrijvers noted that Korean women were often made targets for sexual violence by U.S. personnel alongside the Japanese, stating: "Remarkably, to be of Oriental appearance in Kanagawa was sufficient reason for women on Okinawa to run the risk of rape. When, for example, Korean 'comfort women,' brought to the island by Japanese forces before the battle, fell into American hands, some of them, too, were forced to succumb to the GIs."[96] Americans were warned when operating in China not to assume "an air of white superiority," but this did not stop violence and provocations of the local Chinese population. Incidents of violence increased throughout the war, with stabbings and shootings taking place by 1945. U.S. forces in supposedly allied territory to fight Japan acted like hooligans and bandits rather than as respectful partners, as reflected in *The Official Army History of the China Theatre*.[97] The conduct of U.S. forces following landings in Japanese-occupied southern Korea shortly after Tokyo's surrender was considerably worse still (see Chapter 6).

Western coverage of the Pacific War often portrayed fanatical Japanese soldiers who preferred death to the dishonour of surrender, which helped

justify the extremely low number of prisoners taken by the U.S. and its allies. While Japanese military personnel often showed extreme devotion and bravery, exemplified by the kamikaze bombers, they were still human soldiers with lives and homes to return to who in most cases sought to survive the war. It was often not the case that they refused to surrender, but rather that their capitulations were not accepted. Surrendering Japanese were frequently gunned down on sight, which deterred others from doing the same. As Special Agent with the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, James A. Stone, noted in his study of U.S. interrogation techniques: "Japanese were known to come out of the jungle unarmed with their hands raised above their heads, crying, 'Mercy, mercy,' only to be mowed down by machine-gun fire. U.S. Marines took no prisoners. American forces justified this behaviour on the basis of stories of Japanese treachery." American officers commented on the small number of Japanese prisoners taken: "Oh, we could take more if we wanted to, but our boys don't like to take prisoners. It doesn't encourage the rest to surrender when they hear of their buddies being marched out on the flying field and machine-guns turned loose on them."[98]

It was only after Japan's surrender that large numbers of prisoners were taken into the custody, where extreme mistreatment resulted in widespread deaths. As Australian officer Allan S. Clifton recalled: "We'd beaten up the unarmed Nip [Japanese] working parties lined up on the Sandakan Wharf after surrender. Rolled quarter-ton drums of petrol over them as they lay there, too. Then there was that big captain with the loaded rubber hose. I can still see his elbows weaving through the tent flap. Didn't he love it! That was the way to find the war criminals. Some of them had done nothing, of course, but what did that matter. A Jap's a Jap." When prisoners were taken onto ships, he recalled: "The lads with the lifeboat paddles were waiting for 'em on deck. Sounded good, the crack of wood on their skulls. Bloody hard skulls some of them were too; broke some of the paddles. Those that fell were kicked in the face; if they couldn't get up, overboard they went." Clifton described the screams of those prisoners forced to measure and dig their own graves as they begged for life, among numerous other severe abuses.[99]

Severe war crimes as a result of dehumanization of East Asian adversaries were common to major Western war efforts in the region, as also seen in China, the Philippines, Korea and Vietnam, and were far from unique to war with Imperial Japan. An American lieutenant's letter to his mother effectively summarized prevailing attitudes towards the Japanese as follows: "Nothing can describe the hate we feel for the Nips. The destruction, the torture, burning and death of countless civilians, the savage fight without purpose – to us they are dogs and rats – we love to kill them – to me and all of us killing Nips is the greatest sport known – it causes no sensation of killing a human being but we really get a kick out of hearing the bastards scream."[100] Such attitudes and sadism far eclipsed those of Japanese across the region, and perhaps even the worst of Nazi Germany's excesses against Soviet and Jewish peoples. Writing home taking pride in sadistic conduct in such a way did not occur on other fronts of the war, and even when Japanese personnel committed atrocities in China or the Germans massacred civilians in Eastern Europe it was consistently ensured that the home front was kept in the dark.

Accounts from American personnel detailed the sadistic treatment of the Japanese, with one veteran recalling: "When a Japanese soldier was 'flushed' from his hiding place... the unit... was resting and joking... But they seized their rifles and began using him as a live target while he dashed frantically around the clearing in search of safety. The soldiers found his movements uproariously funny. Finally, however, they succeeded in killing him, and the incident cheered the whole platoon, giving them something to talk and joke about for days afterward." The veteran emphasized the similarity between the way the soldiers viewed him and the way they would view an animal.[101] American personnel were shown to have taken considerable pleasure in torturing the Japanese. One U.S. observer noted that flamethrowers were used to 'roast rats' – rats being a term for Japanese – recalling: "We regulated flamethrowers in such a way that enemy soldiers were set afire, to die slowly and painfully, rather than killed outright with a fully blast of the burning oil."[102] Even senior officers described gaining "pleasure" from burning and drowning the Japanese.[103]

American personnel frequently desecrated the bodies of the Japanese throughout the war. On the Guadalcanal several Japanese heads were

mounted on pikes facing the main army across the river, with the dead and even the dying tossed into open latrines with the sewage by American Marines while others urinated in the open mouths of the wounded soldiers.[104] A common pastime of U.S. Marines during the war was the collecting parts of the bodies of dead Japanese soldiers, with many Marines wearing collections of ears, noses, fingers and other parts as trophy necklaces. American serviceman Charles Lindbergh reported: "They often bring back the thigh bones from the Japs they kill and make pen holders and paper knives and such things out of them." Another time he wrote: "The officer said he had seen a number of Japanese bodies from which an ear or a nose had been cut off. Our boys cut them off to show to their friends in fun, or to dry and take back to the States when they go. We found one marine with a Japanese head. He was trying to get the ants to clean the flesh off the skull, but the odour got so bad we had to take it away from him. It's the same story everywhere I go."[105]

Lindbergh further recalled regarding his observations on the front: "It seemed impossible that men – civilized men – could degenerate to such a level. Yet they had. It was we, Americans, who had done such things, we who claimed to stand for something different. We, who claimed that the German was defiling humanity in his treatment of the Jew, were doing the same thing in our treatment of the Jap."[106] Had the Japanese committed such actions against Western forces they would have been well publicized to mark the Japanese as cruel savages, but as the victors such war crimes by Western forces were well concealed from prevailing narratives of the war.

Japanese skulls were prized by Americans as trophies, with some sent back home to friends, families or lovers. The heads were first 'cured' by ravenous ants or by boiling in kettles. Japanese soldiers' bones were carved into letters and other shapes and also sent to America as gifts. *Life* magazine's picture of the week in May 1944 showed a woman with a Japanese skull from her boyfriend autographed by him and thirteen others and inscribed: "This is a good Jap – a dead one picked up on the New Guinea beach."[107] President Franklin D. Roosevelt, one of the most respected holders of his office in its history, said of one skull sent to the White House: "This is the sort of gift I like to get... There will be plenty more such gifts."[108] Roosevelt not

only received a Japanese skull but was also presented with a letter opener by a member of Congress made with the arm bone of a Japanese soldier.

One of the trophies most coveted by U.S. personnel were gold-capped teeth. In a similar way to the Nazis in the European holocaust,[109] the Americans ripped these valuables from the mouths of the Japanese. U.S. Marines were known to dig up buried Japanese corpses to look for gold teeth.[110] U.S. Marine Eugene Sledge recalled one incident when a Marine captured a wounded Japanese solider:

> *The Japanese wasn't dead. He had been wounded severely in the back and couldn't move his arms; otherwise he would have resisted to his last breath. The Japanese's mouth glowed with huge gold-crowned teeth, and his captor wanted them. He put the point of his knife on the vase of a tooth and hit the handle with the palm of his hand. Because the Japanese was kicking his feet and thrashing about, the knifepoint glanced off the tooth and sank deeply into the victim's mouth. The marine cursed him and with a slash cut his cheeks open to each ear. He put his foot on the sufferer's lower jaw and tried again. Blood poured out of the soldier's mouth. He made a gurgling noise and thrashed wildly. I shouted 'put the man out of his misery.' All I got for an answer was a cussing out. Another Marine ran up, put a bullet in the enemy soldier's brain, and ended his agony. The scavenger grumbled and continued extracting his prize undisturbed.* [111]

American expert Dr Victoria Munro highlighted that East Asians, unlike America's ethnically European adversaries, were associated with game animals from which trophies could be taken.[112] She noted in her study of racially motivated war crimes by U.S. forces:

> *The treatment of this particular enemy as less than human widened what was acceptable to collect from the dead. Trophy-taking during the Pacific War needs to be interpreted in a similar way: not merely as an effect of the powerfully radicalized wartime imagery of the Japanese as subhuman, but as one of the symbolic practices by which these conceptualizations were reproduced and sustained – in opposition to a contrasting default recognition of the Japanese as human. With the media full of metaphors of the hunt and the depiction of the Japanese as any number of subhuman species, it is hardly surprising that these carried over into actions during the war... There was no comparable pattern of abuse of enemy dead in the battles between U.S. forces and troops of the European Axis, but the constructed images of the Japanese, on which rested these practices, were far different than those of the Germans or Italians.* [113]

Australian soldier Eddie Stanton said of the campaign: "Japanese are still being shot all over the place. The necessity for capturing them has ceased to worry anyone. Nippo soldiers are just so much machine gun practice."[114] Those few Japanese prisoners that were taken were often killed shortly after interrogation. As Munro observed: "When they flew Japanese prisoners back for questioning on a C-47, they kept the freight door at the side of the plane open, and when the questioning of each man was concluded, they'd be kicked overboard before they reached their destination."[115] Three years into the war in October 1944 after three years of fighting the Western Allied Powers were holding only 604 Japanese in prisoner of war camps,[116] compared to several million German other European Axis prisoners held in Soviet and Western camps.

The U.S. Navy routinely targeted lifeboats and machine-gunned unarmed survivors in the water. In the air many Japanese pilots were also killed while parachuting out of their planes or still in their harnesses. Rescue boats were frequently targeted to ensure maximum casualties even after a battle was over, with all these actions being serious war crimes.[117] After the Battle of Leyte Gulf, for example, Admiral William Halsey told his destroyers not to be over-zealous about taking survivors prisoner, and other than those needed for interrogation said the rest "would probably like to join their ancestors and should be accommodated [in this wish]."[118] "When this war is over, the Japanese language will be spoken only in hell," he had said, with such statements and actions being common across the military leadership.[119]

Atrocities were widely sanctioned in the United States, from a highly respected president to the civilian population to the admirals and the men on the frontlines, as exemplified by the Japanese skull on President Roosevelt's desk and that on the cover of *Life*. This was a key difference between American and Japanese war crimes. The American public and leadership were widely aware of their forces' conduct where Japan's military and civilian leadership was consistently found to have had no knowledge of their own military's atrocities. Japanese civilians would have been horrified by the massacres carried out in their name, and there were no similar displays by the country's own heads of state or even its military leaders and certainly no bones or skulls sent back to Japanese sweethearts at home.

The Nanjing Massacre, the most notorious incident of misconduct perpetrated by the Japanese military, demonstrated a considerable contrast between the Japanese response to the incident and the American responses to their own war crimes in the region. Not only where Japanese journalists shocked at what they observed, but upon entering the city Prince Yasuhiko Asaka and generals Heisuke Yanagawa and Iwane Matsui were themselves horrified at their forces' conduct and immediately took measures to withdraw them and restore order. This was confirmed by Chinese sources.[120] The atrocious exploits of the Japanese armed forces in Nanjing were never proudly displayed to the population back home, and when word reached Japanese command not only did they not endorse it, but took swift measures to send the officers and soldiers involved back home to prevent any reoccurrences.[121]

War crimes by Western forces targeted not only Japanese soldiers, but also civilians in the limited encounters they had. The first heavily populated Japanese territory the United States attempted to capture with ground forces was Okinawa, where after isolating the heavily outnumbered Japanese garrison the whole of four Army and two Marine divisions supported by naval, amphibious and air forces waged a gruelling eighty-two-day campaign to defeat them. Suffering over 96,000 casualties including 14,000 deaths, the U.S. Military leadership was forced by the tenacity of Okinawa's defenders to seriously reconsider plans for an invasion of other populated islands. Japanese forces were well dug in and fought to the last, and an estimated quarter to one third of the population were killed while over 90 percent of buildings were destroyed.[122]

When U.S. forces landed Okinawa they began mass sexual assaults against local women, which were so pervasive that hundreds of Okinawan women reportedly swallowed poison or jumped to their deaths to end their lives. In just one prefecture over 1,000 women reported having been raped. In one incident personnel from the 4th Marines passed a group of some ten Marines bunched together in a tight circle next to the road. A Marine corporal wrote: They were "quite animated," and he assumed they were playing a game of craps. "Then as we passed them… I could see they were taking turns raping an oriental woman. I was furious, but our outfit kept marching by as though nothing unusual was going on."[123]

Okinawan historian Oshiro Masayu, director of the Okinawa Prefectural Archives, described American conduct in Okinawa as follows:

> *Soon after the U.S. marines landed, all the women of a village on Motobu Peninsula fell into the hands of American soldiers. At the time, there were only women, children and old people in the village, as all the young men had been mobilized for the war. Soon after landing, the Marines 'mopped up' the entire village, but found no signs of Japanese forces. Taking advantage of the situation, they started 'hunting for women' in broad daylight and those who were hiding in the village or nearby air raid shelters were dragged out one after another.*[124]

As reported by the *New York Times* multiple elderly Okinawans years later recounted after the fighting ended that three armed U.S. Marines would come to their village every week and force the villagers to gather all local women. They were then taken to the hills and raped. Veterans from that campaign refused the *Times'* request for interviews. Both the Okinawans and the Americans preferred not to acknowledge the past, as it tarnished the image of both parties. Japanese Professor Masaie Ishihara noted in relation to this: "There is a lot of historical amnesia out there, many people don't want to acknowledge what really happened."[125]

Historian Peter Schrijvers, a leading expert on the conduct of U.S forces on the Pacific War, wrote regarding conduct on Okinawa:

> *Many women in Okinawa came to wish the Americans had just killed them and dumped them in a hole. Instead, the enemy brutally violated them, showing not even the least mercy... Wartime rape serves to sharpen the aggressiveness of soldiers... But rape just as much reflects a burning need to establish total dominance over the other. That is why enemy women are quite commonly sexually abused in front of fathers, husbands, or brothers with the express purpose of increasing also the humiliation of the male foe. That drive for indisputable control, to be accomplished in part through demeaning, was undoubtedly what moved U.S. Marines, for example, to rape almost all women of one of the villages of the Motobu Peninsula. Exactly how many Okinawan women were raped by American troops will never be known, as the victims were either too ashamed – or too frightened to report the crime. The estimate of one Okinawan historian for the entire three-month period of the campaign exceeds 10,000 [note: this is not the number of rapes that occurred, but the number of women targeted. It was most common for women to be raped multiple times.] A figure that does not seem unlikely when one realizes that during the first 10 days of the occupation of Japan there were 1,336 reported cases of*

> *rape of Japanese women by American soldiers in Kanagawa prefecture alone. Again the emphasis is the word reported; likely the vast majority of rapes went unreported.* [126]

Prevailing portrayals of Imperial Japan as uniquely brutal, far more so than the Western powers, remain far removed from reality. Japanese soldiers' excesses in China and towards American soldiers was matched if not surpassed by American atrocities against the Japanese. As an unnamed American soldier of the 592nd Engineers concluded: "I found that any atrocity the Japanese commit can be matched by Americans." This engineer experienced firsthand the conduct of U.S. forces in East Asia, stating six months later: "There is but one law here, KILL, KILL, KILL."[127]

The association of Imperial Japan with war crimes today, and effective erasure of Western crimes from public consciousness, is a result of the potency of the West's position as both the victor and the dominant power in shaping historical narratives and information spaces globally. American journalist Edgar L. Jones, the war's contemporary, noted regarding perceptions of the war in the U.S. itself:

> *We Americans have the dangerous tendency in our international thinking to take a holier-than-thou attitude toward other nations. We consider ourselves to be more noble and decent than other peoples, and consequently in a better position to decide what is right and wrong in the world. What kind of war do civilians suppose we fought, anyway? We shot prisoners in cold blood, wiped out hospitals, strafed lifeboats, killed or mistreated enemy civilians, finished off the enemy wounded, tossed the dying into a hole with the dead, and in the Pacific boiled the flesh off enemy skulls to make table ornaments for sweethearts, or carved their bones into letter openers...*
>
> *We mutilated the bodies of enemy dead, cutting off their ears and kicking out their gold teeth for souvenirs, and buried them with their testicles in their mouths... We topped off our saturation bombing and burning of enemy civilians by dropping atomic bombs on two nearly defenceless cities, thereby setting an all-time record for instantaneous mass slaughter. As victors we are privileged to try our defeated opponents for their crimes against humanity; but we should be realistic enough to appreciate that if we were on trial for breaking international laws, we should be found guilty on a dozen counts.* [128]

Jones was among many to highlighted the discrepancy between America's well concealed atrocities and those of Japan which were widely publicized, stating: "We publicized every inhuman act of our opponents

and censored any recognition of our own moral frailty in moments of desperation."[129]

The narrative perpetuated by the Western powers magnified the crimes of Japanese forces while erasing, rationalizing or granting minimal attention to those of the U.S. and its allies. This manipulation of narrative was perhaps best exemplified by the trial of former Japanese Prime Minister Tojo Hideki under an Australian-led International Military Tribunal. When Tojo's lawyers asked why crimes he was accused of were any worse than the American crimes including the atomic bombing of Japanese population centres, the prosecutors interrupted the Japanese translation and ordered that the remarks be removed from the official trial record and the press.[130] The allegation of double standards appeared to have struck a chord.

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CHAPTER 2

The War Against a Defeated Japan: Punishing a Challenger to the West's Regional Hegemony

> The entire population of Japan is a proper Military Target... There are no civilians in Japan... We intend to seek out and destroy the enemy wherever he or she is, in the greatest possible numbers, in the shortest possible time.[1]
>
> – U.S. Military report during firebombing campaign against Japan

> We, who claimed that the German was defiling humanity in his treatment of the Jew, were doing the same thing in our treatment of the Jap.[2]
>
> – American Soldier Charles Lindbergh

> This is most emphatically not a war [but rather an] attempt at the terrorization of the civilian population through the most horrible means ever conceived by a fiendish mind... Against such enemies of decency and humanity, the civilized world must rise in protest and back up that protest with punitive force. Only through the complete chastisement of such barbarians can the world be made safe for civilization.[3]
>
> – Japanese media on the U.S. Air Force's firebombing of Tokyo

Concluding the Pacific War: Firebombing of Sixty-Seven Cities and Massacring a Defeated Population

By the beginning of 1945 it was clear to all observers that Japan had lost the Pacific War, and although the Western powers had yet to reoccupy most of their overseas colonies the United States had with Australian and British support positioned forces to directly attack the Japanese home islands. Following the imposition of a tight blockade and the beginning of intensified bombing raids on major Japanese cities, Tokyo from the

early spring made multiple attempts to surrender on terms almost identical to those of its final capitulation later that year. Before the war was allowed end, however, the United States would wage an intense months-long firebombing campaign specifically targeting the Japanese civilian population causing levels of destruction unprecedented in world history.

The bombing campaign against Japanese population centres made extensive use of napalm and other incendiaries, which were dropped with conventional explosives from dozens or hundreds of massive B-29 Superfortress bombers. Targets would ignite and suck in all surrounding oxygen, creating firestorms that expanded with tremendous force killing tens of thousands at a time and consuming entire districts. British and American forces were the only ones to carry out such attacks in the Second World War, causing destruction unmatched by any conventional weapon. Firebombing was an effective means of maximizing both damage and casualties where the density of civilian targets was highest. With victory assured, the air campaign focused primarily not on destroying Japan's capacity to wage war but rather on maximizing damage and casualties. To this end U.S. Army Air Force General Curtis LeMay, who led the strategic bombing campaign, was instructed by his superior Commanding General Hap Arnold to prioritize targeting cities rather than factories.[4]

The first firebombing of Tokyo, the most densely populated city in the world,[5] was scheduled for the night of March 9, 1945. The date remains to this day the bloodiest in the history of war. With the Japanese home islands having few remaining effective air defences, leaving even the capital scarcely guarded, American bombers could fly at very low altitudes of just 150-240 metres. The attack involved 334 B-29s each carrying 1,520 bombs, with crews having been ordered to jettison defensive weapons to accommodate more ordinance. Such an attack would have been unthinkable against moderately capable defences, and reflected an awareness that Japan's cities were almost totally unprotected from the air. American airmen themselves, unaware of how poor Japan's air defences were, feared it would be a suicide mission, with General LeMay recalling that if the mission horrified them its psychological impact on the enemy would be even greater. It was part of a broader effort to shock Japan's leadership and general population preceding the U.S. occupation that would inevitably follow.

When Tokyo residents heard air raid sirens at 10:30 pm none could have expected what was to come. A city of 4.3 million, one of the largest in the world, had lost only around 1000 residents to air attacks so far. The B-29s reached the city shortly after midnight, and first approached the primary target of east Tokyo which was its most congested and densely populated residential area. The nature of the target served as a strong indicator of the goal of maximizing civilian deaths. Australian historian Paul Ham presented a vivid account of the firebombing of Tokyo, describing scenes which would years later be repeated in Korean and Vietnamese cities subjected to similar attacks. He wrote:

> *Its scattering of small factories and cottage industries confirmed – in U.S. Air Force public relations' parlance – its designation as a 'military target'... The 4-pound bombs bounced across the parks and rooftops, spewing flaming jellied petroleum onto homes, attics, alleys, schools, hospitals, temples and factories. The high winds fanned these spot fires into a fireball that sucked in the surrounding oxygen. What followed was a firestorm more terrible than anything seen in Germany. The flat plain of Tokyo's Shitamachi residential area, where up to 84,000 people per square kilometre lived in a crush of little paper-and-wood dwellings, was the kindling for a hurricane of flames: 'the scattered fires came together into a single huge flame and 40% of the capital was burned to the ground,' the Japanese Home Affairs Ministry blankly reported.*[6]

The bombers dropped almost half a million incendiary cylinders destroying the homes of 372,000 families alongside hospitals, temples and all manner of other civilian targets. The death toll was estimated at around 120,000, although some estimates were considerably higher.[7] General LeMay, who portrayed the campaign against the civilian population in terms of a body count scorecard, indicated a death toll of over 200,000 stating: "We scorched and boiled and baked to death more people in Tokyo on that night of 9–10 March than went up in vapor at Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined."[8] Historian Mark Selden concluded in his own study that the death toll likely numbered in the hundreds of thousands when considering Tokyo's population density, its "ludicrously inadequate" firefighting capabilities and the hurricane-force winds caused by the firestorm. He noted that it was in the interests of both U.S. and Japanese authorities to cite a much lower death toll. The majority of deaths occurred through burning or asphyxiation, and General LeMay's

insistence that Tokyo be "burned down, wiped off the map" appeared to have yielded the results desired – creating over one million refugees in a single night. [9] The number of bodies stopped the Sumida River entirely "like some hideous, grotesque beaver dam," and as temperatures approached 1000 degrees those who escaped the flames were baked rather than burned to death in their thousands.[10]

LeMay in his memoirs recalled of the firebombing: "It was as though Tokyo had dropped through the floor of the world and into the mouth of hell."[11] U.S. pilots likened the scale of the conflagration to "a glow on the horizon like the sun rising," with pilot Robart Ramer recalling: "The whole city of Tokyo was below us... ablaze in one enormous fire with yet more fountains of flame pouring down." Clouds of black smoke and huge updrafts buffeted the planes "like embers over a campfire," and threw up "the horrible smell of human flesh."[12] Describing the impact of the attack on the civilian population, Paul Ham wrote:

> *Millions chose to flee the flames that chased them through the city like furies. The firestorm flung ahead gigantic cinders – burning beams, joists, palings – which smashed to the ground, or into buildings, lighting new spot fires that fed the advancing inferno. Homes and people, like trees in the paths of a bushfire, burst into flames; families, the elderly, mothers and children went mad with pain and terror; victims rolled about on the molten streets unable to douse the jelly that burned to their bone. The people headed for the parks or along the train lines or rushed to the river and hurled themselves in. Coils of flame surrounded and ensnared the weak or slow or overburdened, who caught fire and fell, unhelped by the fleeing populace; others gave up and knelt at prayer in the direction of the Imperial Palace as the conflagration swept over them. No structures were safe or sacred: hospitals crashed down, their patients incinerated where they lay; temples collapsed on the bowed heads inside; schools, mercifully deserted at night, were ash by dawn... The U.S. [Army] Air Force judged the first firebombing of Tokyo – several raids would follow – a great success, as measured by the scale of destruction and loss of life. General Arnold praised LeMay's brilliant planning and execution, and the courage of his crews. 'Under reasonably favourable conditions,' Arnold added, the U.S. Air Force 'should have the capacity to destroy whole industrial cities.'*
>
> *That is what they did. LeMay meant to take the war to the Japanese people with every weapon in his arsenal: 'Bomb and burn them until they quit,' was the general's guiding principle. In the following weeks LeMay's XXI Bomber Command firebombed the urban areas of every major Japanese city, dropping almost five million incendiaries (98,466 tons/89,327 tonnes) – one third which fell in July 1945 – burning more than two million*

> *properties. Tokyo, Nogoya, Yokohama, Osaka, Koba and Kawasaki were the worse hit, sustaining 315,922 casualties (of whom 126,762 were killed) and the loss of 1,439,115 properties covering 270 square kilometres.* [13]

The United States Strategic Bombing Survey stated that the goal of bombing Japan's cities was to destroy "the basic economic and social fabric of the country." It concluded that "probably more persons lost their lives by fire at Tokyo in a six-hour period than at any time in the history of man. People died from extreme heat, from oxygen deficiency, from carbon monoxide asphyxiation, from being trampled beneath the feet of stampeding crowds and from drowning. The largest number of victims were the most vulnerable: women, children and the elderly."[14] Japanese media described the firebombing attack as "most emphatically not a war" – rather an "attempt at the terrorization of the civilian population through the most horrible means ever conceived by a fiendish mind." By these acts the United States had shown itself to be: "utterly lacking in any ability to understand the principles of humanity. Whatever may be the state of their material civilization, they are nothing but lawless savages in spirit who are ruled by fiendish passions and unrestrained lust for blood. Against such enemies of decency and humanity, the civilized world must rise in protest and back up that protest with punitive force." It concluded: "Only through the complete chastisement of such barbarians can the world be made safe for civilization."[15]

American news outlets with very few exceptions hailed the burning of Japanese population centres from end to end, with *Time* describing the attack on Tokyo as a "dream come true... properly kindled, Japanese cities will burn like autumn leaves."[16] In the same week as the firebombing of Tokyo, Osaka, Kobe and twice Nagoya were targeted in similar attacks. The press and public demanded more and criticized prior restrictions of air attacks to targeting military and industrial facilities. LeMay, at a press conference on May 30, boasted that firebombing had killed a million Japanese so far.

The vilification of Japan as a nation, race and civilization had been key to legitimizing targeting of civilians on the greatest scale possible. A report by intelligence officer Colonel Harry F. Cunninghan stated: "The entire population of Japan is a proper Military Target... There are no civilians in

Japan... We intend to seek out and destroy the enemy wherever he or she is, in the greatest possible numbers, in the shortest possible time."[17] It was abundantly clear that severe war crimes against the populations of entire cities, entailing the massacre of millions, were being condoned at the highest levels. While the B-29 fleet was burning dozens of population centres, several armaments factories and facilities for wartime production which would otherwise have been priority targets were able to survive and continue operating until the end of the war. It was evident that Japan's military power had long since ceased to be a challenge, and the war was already over.

America's Nuclear Experiment: Why Were Nuclear Weapons Employed Against Civilians?

When nuclear strikes hit the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9 of 1945, the response from the American public was much the same as it had been for the firebombing campaign. The two cities were chosen primarily because there was little left to destroy in other population centres following months of firebombing attacks, with the relatively undamaged Hiroshima and Nagasaki providing an effective demonstration of the power of the world's first nuclear bombs. American media hailed the new weapon as the "saviour of mankind," with under two percent of the 595 newspaper editorials criticizing the weapon's use against civilians. Although there were slight differences of opinion and continuing claims to impartiality, the media had long acted as mouthpieces for Washington's position. Widely seen as a spectacular new weapon that could bring a cleaner and quicker end to the Japanese menace, 85 percent of Americans supported launching nuclear strikes which many felt would avenge the Japanese attacks on the U.S. Navy bases at Pearl Harbor.[18]

As severe war crimes the nuclear strikes against two Japanese cities were widely justified by Western sources with claims that they had ended the Pacific War, although analysis of the strikes' strategic impact strongly indicated otherwise. Firebombing had failed to move Tokyo to alter its

terms of surrender, and the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with comparable death tolls to some of the larger firebombing attacks were little different. Senior Fellow at the British American Security Information Council, Ward Wilson, was one of many experts to highlight to this effect:

> *In the three weeks prior to Hiroshima, 26 cities were attacked by the U.S. Army Air Force. Of these, eight – or almost a third – were as completely or more completely destroyed than Hiroshima. The fact that Japan had 68 cities destroyed in the summer of 1945 poses a serious challenge for people who want to make the bombing of Hiroshima the cause of Japan's surrender. The question is: If they surrendered because a city was destroyed, why didn't they surrender when those other 66 cities were destroyed?... Given that Japan had already had major bombing damage done to 68 cities, and had, for the most part, shrugged it off, it is perhaps not surprising that Japan's leaders were unimpressed with the threat of further bombing. It was not strategically compelling.*[19]

Available evidence strongly indicates that the U.S. leadership was aware that nuclear strikes provided little tactical or strategic benefit against Japan. President Harry Truman, who had replaced Roosevelt upon his death in April 1945, had agreed to hold a meeting three days before the first bomb was dropped, and was fully aware that Japan was seeking peace and willing to surrender. Truman was told by generals Douglas Macarthur and Dwight Eisenhower and Naval Chief of Staff William Leahy that there was no military need for nuclear attacks.[20]

In April and May alone Japan had made three attempts to surrender through the neutral states of Portugal and Sweden. On April 7 acting Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu met with Swedish ambassador Widon Bagge in Tokyo and requested he "ascertain what peace terms the United States and Britain had in mind." Bagge relayed the message to the U.S., but Secretary of State Edward Stettinius refuted instructing him to "show no interest or take any initiative in pursuit of the matter."[21] Similar Japanese peace efforts made through Portugal on May 7, and again through Sweden, on the May 10, proved equally fruitless. Further attempts were made through the Soviet Union and Switzerland.[22] On July 12, a month before the nuclear attacks, Emperor Hirohito instructed former Prime Minister Prince Fumimaro Konoe: "It will be necessary to terminate the war without delay." He wished Konoe to secure peace with Washington and London through the Soviet Union, with the prince later recalling that

the Emperor instructed him "to secure peace at any price, notwithstanding its severity."[23]

The presidentially assigned U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey group's report on the air campaign against Japan made clear that the nuclear strikes were wholly unnecessary to end the war. They wrote: "Based on a detailed investigation of all the facts and supported by the testimony of the surviving Japanese leaders involved, it is the Survey's opinion that certainly prior to 31 December 1945 and in all probability prior to 1 November 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated."[24] Supreme Commander of all Allied Forces General Dwight Eisenhower similarly said of the use of the new weapon: "The Japanese were ready to surrender and it wasn't necessary to hit them with that awful thing."[25] He emphasized: "My belief that Japan was already defeated and that dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary... [the bomb's] employment was, I thought, no longer mandatory as a measure to save American lives. It was my belief that Japan was, at that very moment, seeking some way to surrender with a minimum loss of 'face.'"[26]

Even Admiral William Halsey, a known hardliner who called for action "to kick all Japs in the face,"[27] dismissed nuclear weapons as "a 'toy' the scientists wanted to try out." He stated regarding the attack on Hiroshima: "The first atomic bomb was an unnecessary experiment... It was a mistake ever to drop it."[28] Brigadier General Bonner Fellers, then aide to General Douglas MacArthur, was similarly critical and described firebombing and atomic attacks as "one of the most ruthless and barbaric killings of non-combatants in all history."[29] General LeMay dismissed the nuclear attacks, highlighting that the March 9 attack on Tokyo had killed more Japanese than both strikes combined and that similar firebombing raids would be sufficient to achieve America's war aims.[30]

In his extensive study of the use of nuclear weapons and its implications, American historian Gar Alperovitz noted Japan had been sending out peace feelers since September 1944, trying to use China as an intermediary from December, and escalating efforts primarily through the USSR from the spring of 1945. He wrote: "In mid-April [1945] the Joint Intelligence Committee reported that Japanese leaders were looking for a way to modify

the surrender terms to end the war. The State Department was convinced the Emperor was actively seeking a way to stop the fighting."[31] Such efforts by Tokyo were concealed from the American public until after the war by U.S. censorship. *Chicago Tribune* reporter Walter Trohan, for example, was forced by the censorship regime to withhold for seven months a vital report stating:

> *Japanese were offering surrender terms virtually identical to the ones ultimately accepted by the Americans at the formal surrender ceremony on September 2 – that is, complete surrender of everything but the person of the Emperor. Specifically, the terms of these peace overtures included:*
>
> - *Complete surrender of all Japanese forces and arms, at home, on island possessions, and in occupied countries.*
> - *Occupation of Japan and its possessions by Allied troops under American direction.*
> - *Japanese relinquishment of all territory seized during the war, as well as Manchuria, Korea and Taiwan.*
> - *Regulation of Japanese industry to halt production of any weapons and other tools of war.*
> - *Release of all prisoners of war and internees.*
> - *Surrender of designated war criminals.*

The authenticity of Trohan's article was never challenged by the White House or the State Department. After General MacArthur returned from command of the Korean War in 1951 his neighbour in the Waldorf Towers, former President Herbert Hoover, took Trohan's article to him and MacArthur confirmed its accuracy in every detail and without qualification.[32] The American press, having vilified the Japanese highly effectively, would for years play a central role in supporting the misconception that Tokyo's surrender was a direct result of the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

While the damage inflicted by bombings was not a central factor influencing the Japanese leadership's decision to surrender, the destruction of Japan's primary ground forces was seen to have had a much greater impact. The Imperial Japanese Army notably enjoyed a higher status and were much more central to Tokyo's empire building efforts than the Navy. Thus when a swift eleven-day campaign from August 9 saw Soviet forces defeat Japan's elite Kwantung Army and capture its most prized overseas

possession Manchuria, the industrial capacity of which rivalled that of the Japanese homeland itself, it was seen as a turning point for Japanese power to a much greater extent than the destruction of major cities. Prime Minister Kantaro Suzuki thus stated upon hearing of this overwhelming defeat: "the game is up,"[33] with the psychological impact of losing Manchuria and the army considered greater than that of seeing cities levelled or the navy sunk.

The assault on Manchuria entered the USSR into the war and raised a very real risk of imminent Soviet invasion of the home islands. Having been overwhelmingly defeated by the USSR in previous clashes, Tokyo had taken extensive measures to avoid any future conflict and remained wary of its capabilities.[34] The Soviets were certain not to allow the Japanese feudalist social order to continue if occupying Japan – where under Western occupation it was likely that the elites would retain power as they indeed did. As demonstrated in their occupation of Manchuria and northern Korea, Soviet courts showed little leniency towards war criminals or the imperial leadership in sharp contrast to the United States which pardoned many of these figures and placed them in prominent positions (see Chapter 9). A surrender to and occupation by the U.S. was therefore seen as far more favourable by the Japanese leadership to avert the imminent risk of Soviet invasion, adding further urgency to Tokyo's efforts to surrender which had already been underway for several months.[35]

While the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not necessary to bring about an end to the Pacific War, as was increasingly the consensus view among Western scholars, they did benefit Washington's position both by demonstrating the power of nuclear weapons to the Soviet Union and by testing their effects on human subjects. There was growing awareness in Washington that in the post-war world, with the industrial centres of Japan and Europe in ruins and Britain left heavily dependent on U.S. support, Moscow would be the leading potential challenger to American power. President Truman, far more so than his predecessor, had hard-line views against the Soviet Union, famously stating in 1941: "If we see that Germany is winning we ought to help Russia, and if Russia is winning we ought to help Germany, and that way let them kill as many as possible."[36] His perception of a Soviet threat seriously influenced policymaking as

the war neared its end, with attentions were increasingly diverted towards planning for strategic competition with the USSR.

After assuming the presidency in April 1945, Truman was informed by Secretary of War Henry Stimson that American air attacks could leave no targets in Japan on which to test the nuclear bomb "to show its strength." Stimson admitted "no effort was made, and none was seriously considered, to achieve surrender merely in order not to have to use the bomb," adding that American statesmen were keen to deploy the weapon against a Japanese city, despite the lack of a military need, "to browbeat the Russians with the bomb held rather ostentatiously on our hip." The day after Hiroshima was targeted, President Truman voiced his satisfaction with the "overwhelming success" of what he revealingly referred to as "the experiment." General Leslie Groves, director of the Manhattan Project that developed the bomb, himself testified: "There was never any illusion on my part that Russia was our enemy, and that the project was conducted on that basis."[37] Studies of the U.S., Japanese and Soviet diplomatic archives all strongly indicate that this was the primary motive for the nuclear attacks.[38]

Not only was the U.S. leadership well aware that nuclear weapons were not needed to end the Pacific War, but American conduct after occupying Japan strongly indicated that nuclear attacks were perceived as a scientific experiment. Valuable data was harvested by American scientists from survivors in Hiroshima and Nagasaki which was seen as valuable for preparations for a potential nuclear war with the USSR. While those suffering from radiation and contamination expected to receive government support as casualties of war, as all casualties had before, the American military government imposed after Tokyo's surrender ended this compensation and thereby stripped millions of wounded of income. It also refused to acknowledge the existence of radiological contamination or of any unusual conditions arising in survivors of the nuclear attacks, with mention of the subject strictly censored.[39]

Studies of the effects of nuclear attacks were largely conducted under General MacArthur's Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission by teams of American specialists, which gained a reputation for harvesting Japanese cemeteries for remains. Specialists including American doctors were strictly forbidden from treating victims or from providing information on their

findings which could have aided the treatment of the survivors. Without such information Japanese doctors struggled to understand the new phenomenon of radiation poisoning.[40] The way data was sought strongly gave the impression of an experiment being carried out on live subjects. As Paul Ham noted in his study of the nuclear attack:

> *The directive did not mention treatment: prolonging life, easing pain, were neither the intentions nor the by-products of the job. Whether the patients – or more accurately the exhibits – lived or died was immaterial to the foreign doctors' charter. How the victims lived or died, whether their conditions improved or deteriorated; whether they suffered from cancer at some distant date or reproduced it in their children; such were the questions of cold scientific enquiry. In short, irradiated Japanese civilians were to serve as American laboratory rats. Herein lay a benefit – future rationalists would argue – of dropping the bomb on a city: to harvest scientific data about gamma radiation.*[41]

Japan Under Occupation

While it would be untrue to say that American military rule over Japan had only negative consequences, the prevalence of overly positive and at times caricaturish Western depictions of the occupation very frequently portrayed the period in a manner far detached from reality. American newsreels from the 1940s and 1950s showed U.S. soldiers greeted by cheering crowds of grateful Japanese citizens in the streets and women bowing and handing bouquets of flowers to each soldier, describing how Americans offered a helping hand to Japan to rebuild it into a prosperous nation. Through imposition of a very different value system the American occupation did have many impacts on Japanese society widely considered positive. Women were given equal rights by law including the rights own property, obtain higher education, enter government and work in the police department. Chapter Three of the new constitution drafted under occupation gave Japanese citizens inalienable individual rights – including unprecedentedly the right of peasants to own property. Land reform and legal equality for women and working classes were notably among the most prominent promises of Soviet communist ideology

which the Japanese and American leaderships had both feared – although when imposed by the West these reforms were portrayed positively.

A far darker side to the occupation of Japan, which remained the primary experience of much of its population, was the establishment of a comfort women system pressing women, and at times enslaving them outright, to provide sexual services to occupation forces. When Japan surrendered in August 1945 mass rapes by occupation forces, comprised mainly of American and Australian personnel,[i] were expected in part due to the preceding conduct of U.S. personnel on Okinawa. To protect the 'chaste women' of *ippan katei* – daughters of middle- or upper-class families – the Japanese elites took measures to offer occupation forces sexual access to tens and later hundreds of thousands of women from lower social classes. The U.S. Military, alongside ruling elements in Japan, worked with the local police force to set up 'comfort stations' for occupation forces providing sexual access to Japanese women at negligible prices – approximately half the price of a pack of cigarettes.[42] As a result, compared to Okinawa and later Korea and Vietnam, sexual assaults were relatively few in Japan considering the size of the occupying forces and the daughters of Japanese elites were kept relatively safe.

Comfort stations primarily employed women and girls with many dependents, particularly those with parents or young children. Starvation was still endemic in cities following a months-long Western blockade, as it would remain for years under the occupation, which served as an important motivator. Comfort stations were referred to by some historians as 'rape stations,' due to the often dubious consent of women working there, and their establishment was interpreted by some as a concentration of rape to

i Previously seen as the "outpost where the white race would make its last stand in the region," Australia as a European settler colony in the Pacific was long valued by proponents of continued Western hegemony in East Asia particularly when Japan threatened to overturn this longstanding order. In May 1943, for example, the American minister in Canberra had proclaimed the Australians to be America's "natural racial allies in dealing with the problems of the Pacific," with such thinking continuing to shape perceptions of Australia's strategic value long afterwards. (Schrijvers, Peter, *Bloody Pacific: American Soldiers at War with Japan*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010 (p. 146).)

a segment of the population's women in order to spare the others.[43] The official history of the Ibaraki Prefectural Police Department stated: "The comfort women... had some resistance to selling themselves to men who just yesterday were the enemy, and because of differences in language and race, there were a great deal of apprehensions at first." "Sadly, we police had to set up sexual comfort stations for the occupation troops... to create a breakwater to protect regular women and girls," it noted.[44]

From their opening comfort stations were in extremely high demand. The chief of public relations for the Recreation and Amusement Association (RAA), which organized comfort stations and was run by police and Japanese businessmen under supervision of the occupation government, said that on the day of opening he "was surprised to see 500 or 600 soldiers standing in line on the street." He recalled the American officers themselves could hardly keep their men under control. Demand forced the RAA to recruit more and more women each of which had to take up to sixty clients a day – where even for experienced prostitutes ten clients would be considered highly strenuous.[45]

Advertisements for the RAA called for "Women of the New Japan," and did not specify the kind of work involved. They targeted young women left destitute by war. An example was Natsue Takita – a 19-year-old worker left with no relatives after the war. Although reluctant, she needed the income to survive and was persuaded by authorities to accept the offer. She jumped in front of a train a few days after the brothel started operating, as the working conditions were intolerable and both psychologically and physically extremely strenuous. Takita, like many other women, had no other options to survive at a time when people were dying of starvation.

The RAA chief noted that the victims who suffered most were the many women who had no experience of such work and unknowingly answered advertisements. By the end of 1945 the RAA employed 70,000 women, and in 1946 this increased to 150,000 due to the very high demands of the U.S. and Australian occupation personnel. This itself only represented a portion of the number of comfort women in Japan serving occupation forces. Toshiyuki Tanaka, a history professor at the Hiroshima Peace Institute, indicated that due to the significant number of private brothels operating and the number of undocumented destitute women

who sold sex the number of Japanese comfort women serving the Western occupation forces was likely far greater. Australian officer Allan Clifton recalled: "Because of economic hardship and semi-starvation, young and physically desirable women offered themselves at street corners or railway stations in exchange for anything that was edible or capable of conversion to food."[46] After participating in an official investigation into prostitution, in which he found even highly educated former professionals had been forced into the trade by desperation, he recalled "the reason for their occupation was almost always the same: economic hardship and the responsibility of providing for other members of the family."[47]

A memorandum from American Lieutenant Colonel Hugh McDonald shows that it was clear to U.S. forces that the Japanese comfort women were often forced into work by conditions other than the war's destitution – namely by enslavement. McDonald admitted in his writing: "The girl is impressed into contracting by the desperate financial straits of her parents and their urging, occasionally supplemented by her willingness to make such a sacrifice to help her family. It is the belief of our informants, however, that in urban districts the practice of enslaving girls, while much less prevalent than in the past, still exists."[48] Independent brokers, many associated with organized crime such as the Yakuza, were relied on to provide women in such ways. The Women's Volunteer Corps, a government organization which mobilized girls and young women aged 14–25 to work in factories in wartime, was exploited to this end. Groups of these women would be deceived and delivered not to factories, but to brothels serving occupation forces where they would be forced to work.[49]

The RAA ceased to operate in March 1946, just eight months after its foundation, when over 25 percent of U.S. personnel had contracted sexually transmitted diseases. This left 150,000 Japanese women, many having themselves contracted such diseases, as social outcasts in often destitute circumstances. Most continued to work as comfort women illegally, as there were few other options for them.[50] Even when occupation forces had had sexual access to Japanese women at negligible prices through comfort stations, however, widespread sexual crimes were still perpetrated. This increased significantly after the stations closed, as expert on the occupation period historian John Dower observed: "According to one calculation the

number of rapes and assaults on Japanese women amounted to around 40 daily while the RAA was in operation, and then rose to an average of 330 a day after the service was terminated in early 1946."[51] Due to the value attributed to chastity in traditional Japanese society the number of rapes was significantly underreported, with a report from Japanese police stating in regards to this: "Victimized women feel too ashamed to make it public."[52]

Although measures such as the creation of the RAA reportedly reduced incidences of sexual attacks by occupation forces, such crimes were still common and at times extremely brutal and resulted in the deaths of the victims. Political science professor Eiji Takemae wrote regarding the conduct of American personnel in Japan:

> *U.S. troops comported themselves like conquerors, especially in the early weeks and months of occupation. Misbehaviour ranged from black-marketeering, petty theft, reckless driving and disorderly conduct to vandalism, assault, arson, murder and rape. Much of the violence was directed against women, the first attacks beginning within hours after the landing of advanced units. In Yokohama, China and elsewhere, soldiers and sailors broke the law with impunity, and incidents of robbery, rape and occasionally murder were widely reported in the press [which had not yet been censored by the U.S. military government]. When U.S. paratroopers landed in Sapporo an orgy of looting, sexual violence and drunken brawling ensued. Gang rapes and other sex atrocities were not infrequent... Military courts arrested relatively few soldiers for their offences and convicted even fewer, and restitution for the victims was rare. Japanese attempts at self-defence were punished severely. In the sole instance of self-help that General [Robert L.] Eichberger records in his memoirs, when local residents formed a vigilante group and retaliated against off-duty GIs, the Eighth Army ordered armoured vehicles in battle array into the streets and arrested the ringleaders, who received lengthy prison terms.*[53]

The U.S. and Australian militaries did not maintain rule of law when it came to violations of Japanese women by their own forces, and with the Japanese population forbidden from doing so themselves the result was very widespread sexual violence. An example was the attack in April 1946 on the Nakamura Hospital in Omori district by approximately fifty U.S. personnel in three trucks. The soldiers raped over forty patients and thirty-seven female staff, with one woman who had given birth two days prior having her child thrown on the floor and killed. She was then raped as well. Male patients trying to protect the women were also killed.[54] The following week several dozen U.S. military personnel cut the phone lines

to a housing block in Nagoya and raped all the women they could capture there including girls as young as ten years old and women as old as fifty-five.[55] Such behaviour was not unique to U.S. forces, with Australian personnel conducting themselves in much the same way. As one Japanese witness testified: "As soon as Australian troops arrived in Kure in early 1946, they dragged young women into their jeeps, took them to the mountain, and then raped them. I heard them screaming for help nearly every night."[56]

Australian officer Allan Clifton recalled his own experience of the sexual violence committed in Japan:

> *I stood beside a bed in hospital. On it lay a girl, unconscious, her long, black hair in wild tumult on the pillow. A doctor and two nurses were working to revive her. An hour before she had been raped by twenty soldiers. We found her where they had left her, on a piece of waste land. The hospital was in Hiroshima. The girl was Japanese. The soldiers were Australians. The moaning and wailing had ceased and she was quiet now. The tortured tension on her face had slipped away, and the soft brown skin was smooth and unwrinkled, stained with tears like the face of a child that has cried herself to sleep.*
>
> *The eyes of the doctor and nurses turned questioningly, unemotionally towards me. I had seen that look so many times before, in this same hospital. Always it said this: 'So, we are barbarians, and you are civilized, and this is your way of life that you fought against us to preserve, that you now command us to accept. How is it then, that all through the Far East your tribunals are now trying Japanese soldiers for these very crimes? This girl is not a soldier. She had no part in the war. Besides, the war is over.'*[57]

Clifton described the frequent and widespread brutalities committed by Australian personnel which gained them the name Yabanjin – the barbarians. This included seemingly random racially motivated hate crimes against the local population, with the officer recalling as an example "a young lad, who had been knocked down and kicked unconscious, and left lying in the gutter. His head had been distended like a bladder, the features of his face made indistinguishable by the taut skin, one ear pierced by an iron-tipped boot. He had not been robbed, and he was too young to have been a soldier, but he was a 'Jap,' and no better reason would have been needed by his assailants." Regarding the frequency of such conduct by Australian personnel in Japan, Clifton noted "In the last months of 1946, crimes against the civil population had become so numerous that I

was being called out almost every day and night by the Japanese police, so that I was becoming exhausted for lack of sleep." He described conduct of Australian personnel as followed:

> *Bashing of men and youths for the sheer joy of it, setting fire to brothels from pique at being refused entrance, which was forbidden, were others; but robbery, with and without violence, comprised the major number. It is an ugly sight to see a truck-load of twenty or thirty of one's fellow soldiers descend like ravening wolves on a row of market stalls, grabbing fistfuls of tawdy trifles, overturning counters, and punching anyone who looked as though he (or she) might resent it... No amount of denial, glossing-over or whitewashing by army authorities or 'fact- finding' missions can change the facts. I saw countless incidents of the kind I have told of with my own eyes and for every one I had personal knowledge of there were half a dozen of which I had indirect knowledge, from provosts, intelligence reports, and fellow interpreters with other units.*

"I tried not to see the fear in the eyes of shopkeepers when I went shopping," he noted as an indication of the attitudes towards occupation forces as a result of their conduct, with pillaging having left many already impoverished sellers "broken and resourceless."[58]

In contrast to the situation when Western soldiers were in the country, Clifton stressed: "In pre-Occupation Japan, a woman could walk abroad at any hour of day or night without fear of molestation."[ii] While the common defence of U.S. and Australian personnel's behaviour to deflect from criticism of the countries, cultures or military organizations themselves was that "such brutes as these are found among all people, in all armies," Clifton found this increasingly insufficient as "it is a question of proportions." Such

ii Clifton stressed that it was not only outdoors where women were in danger, providing the following example: "Staying indoors was not sufficient to give women protection. One evening a young married woman was reading a book in bed in a hotel... It was a hot night and she fell asleep in the middle of her reading, with the light still burning. She woke a little later to find a huge Australian soldier kneeling beside her, and another swaying in the doorway, his drunken leer telling more clearly than any speech or gesture what was to follow." Japanese men in the next room were too afraid to intervene as the two raped her, and after a police report was filed the conviction, to Clifton's shock, was quashed by Australian courts on the pretext of insufficient evidence. (Clifton, Allan S., *Time of Fallen Blossoms*, Sydney, Cassell, 1950 (pp. 86-90).)

behaviour, he found, was far more prevalent among Australians than other militaries. He noted that the perpetrators often shocked him, describing one Australian soldier who had committed a "disgusting" rape as "a tall, handsome lad of twenty-one or two years of age, with a mild look on his fresh face. One could imagine him in flannels on a cricket field, or at tennis in any middle-class suburb; the pride of doting parents and the quarry of pretty women."[59]

Australian personnel charged with rape were consistently given very minor sentences, with even these most often later mitigated or quashed. Clifton recounted one such event himself when an Australian court quashed a sentence by a military court martial citing insufficient evidence, despite the incident having several witnesses. Courts took measures to protect their own from crimes committed against the Japanese – crimes which were largely regarded as rightful access to 'spoils of war' at the time.[60]

As had been the case in wartime Okinawa, underreporting of rapes by victims in peacetime due to the associated shame in a traditional society and inaction on the part of authorities lowered the figures significantly. As Clifton noted: "The Japanese were very chary of reporting incidents to the police from fear of retaliation or because no recompense could be claimed for damage done, and only inconvenience and unwelcome publicity resulted. Women, naturally, concealed their shame where possible."[61]

With the rapacious conduct of occupation personnel sharply contradicting the image the U.S. military government sought to create of Western occupiers as benevolent saviours, very strict censorship was imposed by the Americans to contain information of rapes and other crimes. Mention of these crimes was strictly forbidden, with the occupation forces having "issued press and pre-censorship codes outlawing the publication of all reports and statistics 'inimical to the objectives of the Occupation.'"[62] The zero-tolerance policy against the reporting of Western crimes was implemented a few weeks into the occupation, almost immediately after Japanese press had begun to report on the widespread rapes and looting by American personnel.[63] It was not only the crimes committed by Western forces, but any criticism of the Western Allied Powers whatsoever which was strictly forbidden for over six years. This left the U.S. military government, the supreme authority in the country, totally unaccountable. Topics such as

the establishment of comfort stations and pressuring of vulnerable women into the sex trade, critical analysis of the black market, the population's starvation level calorie intakes and even references to the Great Depression's impact on Western economies, anti-colonialism or pan-Asianism were all strictly prohibited.[64]

What was particularly notable about the censorship regime was that it was intended to conceal its own existence, meaning that not only were certain subjects strictly off limits, but the mention of censorship itself was also forbidden. As Columbia University Professor Donald Keene noted, "the occupation censorship was even more exasperating than Japanese military censorship had been because it insisted that all traces of censorship be concealed. This meant that articles had to be rewritten in full, rather than merely submitting XXs for the offending phrases."[65] For the U.S. military government it was essential not only to control information – but also to give the illusion of a free press when the press was in fact more restricted than it had been in wartime in the imperial era.

By taking censorship further – to censor even the mention of censorship – the United States could claim to stand for freedom of press and freedom of expression. With an extreme degree of control over Japan's media landscape and information space, the American military government could attempt to foster good will among the Japanese people while making crimes committed by Western personnel appear as isolated incidents. While the brutality of American and Australian conduct towards Japanese civilians was evident during the war and in its immediate aftermath, it did not end when the military government dissolved with American bases remaining in the country and crimes including rapes continuing to be committed widely (see Chapter 9).

Remaking Japan

By the end of the Pacific War the average Japanese calorie intake had declined tremendously, with elementary school children in 1945 significantly shorter than in 1937 and infant mortality much higher. Japan's

defeat occurred in midsummer when the harvests of the previous year had run out, and the harvest of 1945 was meek with the U.S. Military having directly targeted crops under the fittingly named Operation Starvation. Manpower shortages, adverse weather and insufficient tools exacerbated the situation. In early October Tokyo had only a three day rice supply based on rations barely sufficient to keep a non-active adult alive. With food from the Asian mainland cut off after the occupation, which further exacerbated the situation, many expected that a resulting famine would kill millions. The first deaths from malnutrition were recorded in late October shortly after the occupation began, and began to occur in all major cities. Minister of Finance Tanzan Ishibashi informed the United Press that up to ten million might starve to death if food imports were not immediately forthcoming, although this was considered an exaggeration.[66]

Having itself caused an imminent famine, the United States begun food shipments to Japan to avert the anticipated disaster. Calorie intakes were still well below the starvation level, with food rations being poorer than the wartime rations from the Japanese government, but the American shipments nevertheless averted the risk of mass death from hunger. Having positioned itself as an indispensable source of food, the United States could portray itself as a generous benefactor. A yearbook from the time described food shipments from America as coming to Japan "like a merciful rain during a drought." Holding back the 'rain' for months, then allowing a trickle to return, did much for the Americans' image. In the words of a Japanese history, they "kindled a light of hope in the hearts of depressed residents."[67] Where the Western powers had gained considerable leverage over the Japanese Empire by controlling its access to oil and other raw materials such as iron and rubber, following its defeat the Japanese population relied on the U.S. for 90 percent of their staples.

American and allied portrayals of Japan changed considerably after the war as the country that had represented the greatest challenge to Western hegemony over East Asia was reshaped into a Western client and a key supporter of the Western-dominated regional order. Portrayals of the Japanese as monstrous, bestial and outright evil were replaced with images of culturally immature dependents subservient to Western guidance.[68] A notable

example was a prominent statement by General Douglas MacArthur who ran the U.S. military occupation from his command centre in Tokyo. When asked whether the Japanese could be counted on to stay true to the value system imposed in the occupation period he confidently replied: "If the Anglo-Saxon was say 45 years of age in his development, in the sciences, the arts, divinity, culture, the Germans were quite as mature. The Japanese, however, in spite of their antiquity measured by time, were in a very tuitionary condition. Measured by the standards of modern civilization, they would be like a boy of twelve as compared with our development of 45 years... they were working on a different level."[69]

John Dower wrote regarding MacArthur's statement,[iii] prevailing Western attitudes towards the Japanese, and Japan's perceived proper place in the Western-led order Asia:

> *The general's disquisition on the evolutionary backwardness of Japan fit perfectly with the patronizing and dismissive appraisals others were offering of the country's economic immaturity... The entire occupation had been premised on acquiescing to America's overwhelming paternalistic authority; and even as sovereignty drew near, even as the nations was being rehabilitated as a Cold War partner, the Americans never had any real expectation that an equitable relationship would be the result. The new military was a 'little American army,' obviously destined to remain under U.S. control. The new economy was inordinately dependent on American support and indulgence.*[70]

Japanese histories of the country were turned to pulp with new American approved ones replacing them. The national religion of Shintoism was thoroughly purged as it was seen to propagate values contrary to those of

iii Similar statements were far from uncommon among Westerners with experience in the Pacific. John Streicker, the British Administrative Secretary of Stanley Camp, claimed, Japan "had learned to run before it could walk," referring to a "nasty and vicious period of infancy... [in] which the spoilt child was never smacked by its western godparents." He stressed: "It may yet be not too late to re-educate this erring race," but asked: "Will the beaten nation grow to a vicious, incorrigible delinquent, hating always the great powers sent to chastise her, or will she, like a beaten dog, nuzzle the hand which administered the beating?" The country's political development in subsequent years would strongly tend towards the latter. (Streicker, John, *Captive Colony: The Story of Stanley Camp*, Hong Kong Collections, Hong Kong University (HK 940.547252 S8).)

Western liberal democracy which the occupation intended to impose.[71] As part of efforts to deeply remake the country, MacArthur believed that spreading Christianity in Japan would further U.S. interests, "civilising" the population and creating public hostility to "atheistic communism." He spoke of increasing the number of missionaries as the number of occupation forces fell, and invited the Pocked Testmament League to distribute Bibles after which the general proudly recorded that 10 million translated bibles were in Japanese hands. "Gradually a spiritual regeneration in Japan began to grow," he stated in triumph, although numbers converting to Christianity remained few.[72]

With a new constitution written by Americans, Japanese journalists adopted the standard joke: "Have you read the new constitution?" "No. Has it been translated into Japanese yet?" This was the public consensus, but was strictly forbidden from being published in media by the occupation forces which insisted that it was an indigenous document. Japanese inputs in its drafting were in fact negligible.[73] As Japan's first elections were held in the spring of 1946, MacArthur's office "carefully screened" all candidates before allowing them to run. The general subsequently highlighted that if elections yielded an unfavourable result he had the power to dissolve Japan's new parliament and start again. This was carried through to exclude President of the Liberal Party Ichiro Hatoyama after he came out on top in elections that year. As political journalist Robert Smith, an expert on MacArthur, highlighted, the government formed by Hatoyama's successor was "about as far from democracy as could be conceived, short of putting power back in the hands of the Shoguns [the military rulers of Japan until 1868]."[74] Aside from extreme censorship and an arbitrary silencing of Japanese with unfavourable politics by MacArthur, in particular leftists,[75] many aspects of the occupation force itself reflected the sharp discrepancy between the values it was supposedly imposing on Japan and those its own leadership ascribed to. A notable example was the fact that three of the four swimming pool in Tokyo available to occupation personnel were off limits to Black Americans, with MacArthur personally ensuring that segregation remained into the 1950s despite an executive order from the White House for integration.[76]

Efforts to remake Japan, its politics and its value system in the American image were imposed when society and the population were at their most vulnerable. Highlighting the nature of these efforts, a report by *Time* in 1947 told the story of a 20-year-old ex-soldier who had been sleeping in Tokyo railroad stations waiting for a chance to take a university entrance exam. He stated, speaking for "his fellow students":

> *In Japan today there are many restrictions which MacArthur has placed upon the people which are not the will of the people. Where is the difference between democracy and what we had before? I don't know. There are too many things about democracy which we students have not the time to study. All of us here walk three kilometres a day to get a meal or a little rice and radish. It is difficult to contemplate the philosophy of government under such circumstances.* [77]

Japan suffered from a state of exhaustion in defeat which came to be known as *kyodatsu,* with years of hardship and sacrifice having seemingly amounted to nought. British historian Richard Storry, the war's contemporary, referred to the result as "destruction of traditional beliefs that amounted to a moral revolution" in which the status of the country's prior ideology and path to ascent were discredited. This provided occupation forces with significant room to remake the country.[78] Where beliefs and ideology changed to reflect those of the occupier, Japan's pre-war elite largely remained entrenched but were now subordinated to American power. Washington needed a reliable apparatus through which to run the country for which maintaining much of the pre-war elite in power was a practical choice. As John Dower observed, "much of the rest of the world – on both sides of the Cold War divide – was in fact, appalled and alarmed by the haste with which the democratization agenda had been abandoned, the old guard resurrected, and remilitarization promoted. In such circumstances, it was still difficult to imagine a sovereign Japan as anything other than dependent on and subordinate to the United States – a client state in all but name."[79]

With prospects for a resurgent Japanese challenge to Western hegemony over Asia apparently quashed indefinitely, the American press focused on the new challenge to Western empire which was the Soviet Union and emphasized the importance of rebuilding Japan as a Western-aligned

power with an anti-Soviet foreign policy. U.S. policymakers concluded that a strong Japan was essential to quashing future challenges to Western dominance in the region.[80] Japan went on serve as a staging ground for U.S. military operations against other Asian nations including Indonesia, Vietnam, Korea and China, and would continue to host over 100 U.S. military bases into the twenty-first century.[81] Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone on this basis referred to his country in 1983 as America's "unsinkable aircraft carrier in the Pacific" – a sharp contrast to its prior status as the centre of resistance to Western domination.[82] With the only Asian power capable of challenging Western power brought to its knees, and Western primacy expected to be perpetuated indefinitely, General MacArthur thus proclaimed: "The Pacific is now an Anglo-Saxon lake."[83]

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CHAPTER 3

Undermining China: America's Twenty-Year War to Destroy the People's Republic

> China... looms as a major power threatening to undercut our importance and effectiveness in the world and, more remotely but more menacingly, to organize all of Asia against us.[1]
>
> – 1969 Pentagon Papers

> Our hope of solving the problem of the mainland of China was not through attack on the mainland but rather by actions which would promote disintegration from within.[2]
>
> – Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Walter Robinson

The United States and the Chinese Civil War

By the time of Imperial Japan's surrender in September 1945 China had been in a state of civil war for eighteen years between the nationalist Guomindang (GMD) led by Chairman Chiang Kai-shek and the forces of the Communist Party of China led by Chairman Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai. This conflict was itself preceded by years of instability and division between rival warlord factions, which was only the latest stage in China's 'century of humiliation' during which narcotics addition was rampant and the population largely destitute. Where British and French victories in the Opium Wars marked its beginning, the Civil War marked the conclusion of the darkest century in China's millennia-long history. The changes in the country which resulted fundamentally altered the East Asian regional order to the detriment of Western interests.

Hostilities between the GMD and communist forces first broke out in 1927 when the former tried to purge the latter from what had previously been a united nationalist movement. This conflict continued despite Japan's occupation of Manchuria in China's northeast in 1931 and the outbreak of open hostilities between Japanese and Guomindang forces in 1937. Although the GMD opposed the Japanese invasion, the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) among others observed that their forces often avoided direct confrontation and prioritized fighting communist forces.[3] The internal enemy was seen to pose a greater threat, which was a position best summarized by Chairman Chiang's statement: "Communism is a disease of the heart, the Japanese are but a disease of the skin."[4] U.S. reports consistently found that the Guomindang were crippled by corruption and poor leadership, resulting in large numbers defecting to join either the Japanese or the communists.

After the United States joined the war against Japan directly in December 1941 both the GMD and the communists worked with American forces against their common enemy. The Communist Party's armed forces the People's Liberation Army (PLA) became well known for rescuing and caring for downed American airmen and returning them to U.S. bases,[5] with the *New York Times* noting: "The Communists did not lose one airman taken under their protection. They made a point of never accepting rewards for saving American airmen."[6]

Despite their wartime cooperation, the United States almost immediately turned against the Chinese communists after Japan's surrender and began to play a central role in the Chinese Civil War to ensure a victory for the Guomindang. The communists appeared entirely independent with few ties even to the Soviet Union, which contrasted to the GMD that were much more likely to govern in line with Western interests. As part of this effort the U.S. begun to rearm Japanese military personnel, now subordinate to American officers, to fight alongside Guomindang forces and the U.S. Marine Corps. To justify this President Harry Truman stated: "It was perfectly clear to us that if we told the Japanese to lay down their arms immediately and march to the seaboard, the entire country would be taken over by the communists. We therefore had to take the unusual step of using the enemy as a garrison until we could airlift Chinese National [GMD]

troops to South China and send the Marines to guard the seaports." He described it as "using the Japanese to hold off the communists."[7]

Power vacuums in many Japanese-held territories in China that emerged after Tokyo's sudden surrender fuelled a race to reach key strategic locations such as major ports and cities, with the U.S. intervening to ensure that these all fell under GMD control. American air and naval assets facilitated a massive and rapid strategic redeployment of 400,000–500,000 GMD personnel to seize key locations, many of which would otherwise have quickly been taken by the communist PLA. U.S. Marines also participated, and two weeks after the end of the war when Beijing was surrounded and about to be captured by communist forces only the Marines' swift deployment prevented this.[8] Shanghai, too, was kept out of PLA control only because American transport planes redeployed elite GMD units to secure it.[9] American aircraft were deployed for frequent reconnaissance flights over communist-held territory providing valuable intelligence to Guomindang forces, and 50,000 Marines were dispatched to guard railway lines, coal mines, ports, bridges and other strategic locations. Reports from the communist leadership indicate that U.S. forces also actively took to the offensive, attacking areas under their control and bombarding PLA positions.[10] The United States, although limited by war weariness and a lack of public support for further foreign intervention, was using almost all means at its disposal to ensure a Guomindang victory.

Faced with a vastly more numerous and better armed adversary, the PLA waged a guerrilla war relying heavily on aid and shelter from the population. This led to the saying among Chinese communists: "Guerrillas are fish swimming in the water of the people." The result was severe reprisals by American and Guomindang forces against population centres suspected of aiding their enemies. A report from a U.S. Marine in China to his congressman stated that in at least one incident the Marines had blasted a small Chinese village "unmercifully" without knowing "how many innocent people were slaughtered."[11] American combat aircraft frequently strafed and bombed PLA forces and in at least one instance massacred the population of a communist-held town by machine gun.[12] As the PLA enjoyed widespread support particularly from rural communities, entire populations could easily be perceived as hostile and targeted indiscriminately by the

50,000 Marines and other assets deployed, presaging similar killings on far larger scales during later U.S. military interventions in Korea and Vietnam.

By 1946 100,000 American personnel had been deployed in China, and while their official mission was to disarm and repatriate the Japanese this was often secondary to the more immediate objective of supporting the GMD's war effort. As a Marine lieutenant in China noted in December 1945: "They ask me, too, why they're here. As an officer I am supposed to tell them, but you can't tell a man that he's here to disarm Japanese when he's guarding the same railway with [armed] Japanese."[13] Many U.S. personnel around the world, including the Marines in China, started to protest not being sent home after the end of the war, with those in many countries being similarly deployed for anti-communist missions.[14]

Despite fighting against much larger combined GMD, U.S. and Japanese forces, the PLA managed to regroup from a series of initial defeats and went on to gain the upper hand. By 1947 a communist victory, considered near impossible by all major powers in 1945, appeared imminent. In early 1947 the U.S. began the withdrawal of its ground forces, but deployed the renowned Flying Tigers fighter squadrons against the communists. The Tigers had previously flown for the GMD against Japan, and had interlocked with the newly formed Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the successor to the OSS, to become its first ever air unit. They flew supply missions to besieged GMD cities and transported supplies, food and munitions.[15] Generous American assistance ranging from arms to intelligence and airlifts continued to bolster the Guomindang.

By 1949 U.S. aid to the Guomindang had almost reached $2 billion in cash and a further $1 billion worth of military hardware. These were tremendous sums at the time, equivalent to tens of billions of dollars in the 2020s, and came at a time when the United States was itself undergoing a serious post-war recession. This reflected the perceived importance of keeping China in the Western sphere of influence at all costs. As part of its support a full thirty-nine Guomindang divisions had been trained and equipped by the Americans to fight communist forces.[16] The PLA by contrast had received negligible foreign support, with their only significant foreign backer being North Korea which primarily provided manpower support. This solidarity was a result of the close ties the PLA had formed

with Korean resistance to the Japanese Empire in their struggle for independence, with the resistance having gone on to form the leadership of the new Korean republic (see Chapter 6).

The GMD leadership had hardly proven effective in the war with Japan, and Chairman Chiang Kai-shek was known to set his generals impossible tasks while his scorched earth polices devastated rural communities for very modest gains. This was exemplified at the Battle of Nanjing in 1937 when a Japanese force subjugated a far more numerous and heavily armed Chinese garrison within days as failures in GMD command, organization and leadership led its forces into a chaotic retreat.[17] Another was Chiang's personal decision to destroy the dams on the Yellow River in 1938 in a desperate attempt to slow the Japanese advance. This directly caused the deaths of 1 million of China's rural population, displacing four million more and causing both plague and famine,[18] all while having a negligible impact on the Japanese advance.[19] A propensity for such failures similarly undermined the GMD during the Civil War, with scorched earth policies alienating and impoverishing much of the population while poor strategy and lacking leadership negatively compensated for the GMD's enormous material advantages.

The communists took great care to portray themselves to the impoverished population as paragons of honesty, progressiveness and fairness, and were seen to lead by example which was key to their popular appeal. As a result the people voted with their support, and not only did the rural population back the PLA but disillusioned Guomindang forces transferred entire divisions and their weapons to the communist side through mass defections. Although Guomindang forces had acquired around 1000 American aircraft and over 200 more from Canada and Britain immediately after Japan's defeat, air power was constrained by the frequency with which pilots would defect to the other side.[20] Even when they did not defect, Guomindang forces were mocked as "ammunition carriers" for their propensity to move into battle very heavily armed with American weaponry but consistently quickly abandon it in hasty retreats and thus arm the PLA.[21]

Head of the U.S. Military Mission in China, General David Barr, himself concluded the Guomindang's defeats despite "marked superiority… in

all types of equipment" was a result of "the world's worst leadership and many other morale destroying factors that lead to a complete loss of will to fight." He emphasized "the complete ineptness of the military leadership and the widespread corruption and dishonesty throughout the armed forces."[22] "No battle has been lost since my arrival due to lack of ammunition or equipment," Barr stressed to underline this point.[23] As former U.S. State Department employee William Blum observed: "The Chiang dynasty was collapsing all around in bits and pieces. It had not been only the onslaught of Chiang's communist foes, but the hostility of the Chinese people at large to his tyranny, his wanton cruelty, and the extraordinary corruption and decadence of his entire bureaucratic and social system."[24]

There was a broad consensus among U.S. analysts supporting Barr's position regarding the cause of the Guomindang's failures despite the tremendous American support it received.[i] American delegations which had visited Chinese communist territory noted the stark contrast with areas under the GMD, which were largely responsible for the latter's ultimate defeat. Reports on the communists by an American delegation sent in 1944,

i American scholar Laura Tyson Li summarised regarding the causes for the GMD's defeat: "Popular disillusionment with Kuomintang [GMD] rule, however, was only part of the reason why so many Chinese, especially intellectuals and students, but also merchants and industrialists, civil servants and hundreds of thousands of soldiers, were siding with the Communists. The Communists had built a reputation for effectiveness, honesty, and credibility, and from their rural base had shown themselves to be China's most dynamic political force. They had become known for keeping their word, carrying out their policies, and correcting their mistakes. The exemplary behaviour of Communist military and civilian personnel in areas they occupied contrasted sharply with the often abominable behaviour of the Nationalists [GMD]... The Communists strived to apply their revolutionary principles to solving China's practical realities, while Chiang Kai-shek attempted to mold China and its people to fit his lofty theories of what he thought China should be... Mao insisted that the Communist party should become close to the people, and thus earned their trust, while Chiang tried to distance himself from the ordinary people, thus alienating himself from them. This was the fundamental reason why the Communists were able to appeal so effectively to the hearts and minds of the Chinese people in the 1940s, and Chiang was not." (Li, Laura Tyson, *Madame Chiang Kai-Shek: China's Eternal First Lady*, New York, Atlantic Monthly Press, 2006 (p. 293).)

before the U.S. had joined the GMD's war effort against them, were immensely positive with a sense that they had "come into a different country and are meeting different people." The leader of the delegation, political analyst John Service, noted that "bodyguards, gendarmes and the claptrap of Chungking officialdom are... completely lacking." By contrast he noted of the Chinese communist leadership: "Mao and the other leaders are universally spoken of with respect... these men are approachable and subservience toward them is completely lacking." He observed the lack of censorship which had been prevalent in Guomindang areas, and the sense of freedom in communist areas. "To the casual eye there are no police in Yenan," he reported of the communist-held region in contrast to the GMD's police state. "Morale is very high... there is no defeatism but rather confidence." Service and others in his delegation reported that communist troops were better disciplined, their government and military did not face the widespread corruption their adversaries did, and policies were more economically just – all of which won a great deal of support from the population. It was these factors which likely decided the outcome of the war despite American and Japanese military support and far larger forces, resources and territories at the disposal of the GMD.[25]

Chairman Chiang had himself written in his personal diary in late 1948, by which time a communist victory appeared inevitable, that the Guomindang had failed primarily due to the corruption and "rot" within its leadership.[26] While Washington was under no illusions as to the nature of its client government, it nevertheless went to great lengths to impose it on China.[27] Short of a full-scale invasion with hundreds of thousands of personnel, something which would have been near impossible in such a large country in the post-war international and domestic political climate, all measures possible to keep the Guomindang in power were taken.[28] For the United States a dependent client government, even "the world's worst leadership," was far preferable to a genuinely popular government that was independent of Western influence.

In the summer of 1949 the Guomindang leadership fled to Taiwan taking numerous national and artistic treasures and the country's entire gold reserve with them.[29] They had prepared the archipelago off the mainland's eastern coast two years beforehand by terrorizing its population and using

military force to assert their authority. The massacres are estimated to have killed up to 28,000 of Taiwan's indigenous population,[30] with the GMD admitting to killing 18,000–28,000 Taiwanese in a single 1947 massacre alone.[31] Americans present on Taiwan equated the imposition of Guomindang rule on the territory with having "put all Formosans [native Taiwanese] into slavery,"[32] with U.S. Consul General John MacDonald writing in September 1949: "Nothing short of a miracle would make them [the Formosans] forgive the KMT [same as GMD] for [their] past record."[33] With Taiwan held by a U.S.-aligned government the territory would become a key staging ground for the United States to wage a concerted campaign to undermine the communist-governed Chinese mainland, and came to host American nuclear weapons and 30,000 military personnel. As the flags of the Guomindang-led Republic of China were lowered on the mainland, the new communist-led People's Republic of China (PRC) was proclaimed on September 21, 1949.

The GMD's defeat was firmly at odds with the prevailing American post-war worldview. As British journalist and China scholar Felix Greene noted: "Americans simply could not bring themselves to believe that the Chinese, however rotten their leadership, could have preferred a communist government."[34] Many in the U.S., believing that no population could choose communists over a pro-Western government, rationalized this with claims that the PLA must have been supported by the USSR to gain an unfair advantage. This was despite Moscow having openly refused to side with the communists and advised their leadership to dissolve the PLA and join the GMD's government as a junior partner, while itself signing a Treaty of Friendship and Alliance with the Guomindang. American sources reported repeated attempts by the USSR to distance themselves from the Chinese communists in the firm belief that a military struggle was unwinnable.[35] The Soviet leadership believed the GMD would provide stability across the USSR's eastern borders and were at the time keenly focused on tensions in post-war Europe.[36] As a result 1947 U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall publicly confirmed that there was no evidence that the Chinese communists had Soviet support.[37] Indeed, the USSR had previously refused to aid the PLA to fight the Japanese Empire while diverting all military aid to China to the GMD.[38] Nevertheless the myth of the Soviet Union playing a

central role in the Chinese communist victory persisted, providing a more palatable explanation for the conflict's outcome than the uncomfortable reality that the United States had been fighting against the clear will of the Chinese population.

The communist victory came as much as a surprise in Moscow as it did in Washington, with Soviet leader Joseph Stalin in 1948 admitting that he had advised the Chinese communists against fighting a revolutionary war. He stated:

> *It is true, we also have made mistakes... we considered the development of the uprising in China had no prospects, that the Chinese comrades should join the Chiang Kaishek government and dissolve their army. The Chinese comrades agreed here in Moscow with the views of the Soviet comrades, but went back to China and acted quite otherwise. They mustered their forces, organized their armies and now, as we see, they are beating Chiang Kaishek's army. Now, in the case of China, we admit we were wrong. It has proved that the Chinese comrades and not the Soviet comrades were right.*[39]

Sabotage and Terrorism: America's Campaign to Bleed China Out After Independence

The Chinese communist victory came as the greatest blow to Western foreign policy designs in the post-war era, and was widely termed the 'Loss of China' in the United States reflecting the Guomindang's strong alignment with Western interests. This term, it was widely noted, implied that China had been seen to belong to the U.S. or at least to its sphere of influence before 1949. Despite the extensive American involvement in the Chinese Civil War, the Foreign Ministry of the new People's Republic of China headed by Zhou Enlai made repeated overtures to Washington seeking friendship and a strengthening of bilateral ties. These were flatly rejected, and the U.S. instead undertook several attempts to assassinate Zhou.[40] The new Chinese republic was met with unrelenting hostility, and while the Chinese communist movement had not been distinctly anti-American throughout the civil war it soon became so.

Following its extensive involvement in the Civil War the CIA continued to play a leading role in operations against China. Although the Guomindang had relocated their capital to Taiwan, much of their forces had fled southwards to Myanmar after their defeat. The CIA quickly moved to regroup these remnants into a fighting force which it could set against the new Chinese state, with CIA officers directing them in combat on multiple incursions into Chinese territory from the early 1950s as a means of waging war by proxy.

In April 1951, a time when the United States Military was directly engaged against Chinese forces on the Korean Peninsula, several thousand militiamen accompanied by CIA advisers and supplied by American C-46s and C-47 transport aircraft crossed into China's Yunnan province. This was effectively an attempt to open a second front against China and thus further stretch the new republic's already scarce resources. The incursion force was defeated and driven back by the PLA in a matter of days and sustained heavy casualties, with several CIA advisers killed.[41] Later in 1951 a similar force entered China, holding a 160km strip of territory before being driven back. While these forces had little chance of overthrowing the Chinese government, their purpose was to cause destruction, hinder China's post-war recovery and further strain its resources.[42]

Attacks on China by CIA-directed militias continued intermittently, with the agency going to considerable effort and expense to strengthen these forces. American engineers were flown to Myanmar to construct and expand airstrips, CIA air squadrons were brought in for logistical services, and large quantities of American heavy weapons were flown in often through Thailand. The force was expanded through recruitment of men from Myanmar's hill tribes, while more personnel were flown in from Taiwan. The CIA's army in Myanmar soon numbered over 10,000 men, and continued to conduct raids into China for over a decade. Militias became increasingly capable of financing themselves, frequently indulging in banditry and trading in drugs. Many of its leaders became opium barons operating in the Golden Triangle – a term coined by the CIA for the land encompassing parts of Myanmar, Laos and Thailand which was the world's largest source of opium and heroin. It was one of the many incidents of Western intelligence agencies' involvement in the drug trade

in East Asia, and CIA pilots flew the drugs to their destinations to secure the co-operation of those in Thailand who were assisting the operation.[43]

Between raids into China, CIA-backed militias frequently clashed with Myanmar's own armed forces leading the government in Yangon protesting their presence, criminal activities and the substantial American support they were receiving to both Washington and the United Nations. The CIA responded to this potential embarrassment by trying to put pressure on their assets to leave Myanmar, but the GMD government in Taiwan had been happy to allow them to bleed the new Chinese republic out on its behalf and was unwilling to lose them. Taipei threatened to expose the CIA's covert support for these forces if they tried to end their operations from Myanmar. While there had been hopes that China could be provoked into sending forces into Myanmar to root out the militias, and that this would force the neutral government in Yangon to align itself with the West, when the PLA did strike in January 1961 they did so as part of a combined effort co-ordinated with Myanmar's own military. The two parties jointly overwhelmed the main base of the militias and ended their operations permanently.[44] Myanmar soon afterwards renounced U.S. aid and moved to improve relations with China.[45] Many of the former Guomindang forces who had worked for the CIA in Myanmar soon afterwards found work as part of another CIA army being built in Laos, with some also participating in a CIA war effort against Indonesia in early 1958 (see Chapter 4).

Alongside operations from Myanmar several islands within 10 kilometres of the Chinese mainland, particularly Quemoy and Matsu, were used as staging grounds for U.S.-backed forces with American advisors to launch multiple attacks at battalion strength. Bombing forays were also launched against Chinese targets. According to American reports, Chiang Kai-shek was himself "brutally pressured" by the U.S. to build up military forces on these islands around 1953, as Washington sought to "unleash" him against the mainland.[46] The islands were also used to disrupt trade with attacks and sabotage and to launch incursions by small commando-type teams to gather intelligence and destroy Chinese infrastructure. When the Chinese government retaliated it was portrayed in Western reports as having acted sporadically and attacked U.S. and GMD forces on neighbouring islands without provocation, with the preceding incursions carried out by

U.S.-backed forces consistently receiving little or no mention. PLA artillery attacks on the Quemoy Islands two kilometres east of the mainland killed American officers stationed there on at least one occasion.

CIA-trained combat teams on Taiwan were frequently dropped onto the mainland for sabotage, intelligence gathering and other offensive operations. As CIA case officer Ralph McGehee, who had formerly been stationed in Taiwan, stated, the CIA was working "to train and drop teams of Chinese on the mainland to develop resistance movements and gather intelligence."[47] CIA reports highlighted that operations from Taiwan aimed to destabilize China by starting a guerrilla insurgency, with sizeable sabotage and psychological warfare operations playing important roles. Even if they failed to overthrow the People's Republic, they would undermine its post-war economic recovery and keep the country permanently on a costly war footing.[48]

American operatives were hired to be "dropped by parachute into Szechuan... to organise a group of anti-communist Kuomintang [Guomindang] soldiers who remained up in the hills in Szechuan and work with them in a number of operations." Attempts were also made to use clans from the Muslim Hui minority in China's far northwest, commanded by tribal leader Ma Pu-fang who had close ties to the GMD, to form an additional front. The CIA dropped large quantities of weapons, ammunition and radios and scores of agents into western China accordingly, although little came of these efforts. From April 1951 until the end of 1952 alone the agency spent approximately $100 million buying enough arms and ammunition for 200,000 guerrillas, although not even a small fraction could be used since willing insurgents were few and far between.[49] GMD forces on Taiwan were provided state of the art U.S. hardware including AIM-9 air-to-air missiles, F-101 supersonic fighters and multiple classes of surveillance aircraft such as the RF-84, RF-101, RB-57 and U-2. They were often the first clients in the world to receive new weapons systems due to the importance Washington attributed to their operations in the mainland's airspace.[50] At the height of tensions in 1958 the U.S. Air Force deployed 144 F-100 and F-101 fighters to Taiwan and Okinawa, while Navy deployed 500 combat aircraft, six carriers and 150 escort and support ships

to the Taiwan Strait, which included assets armed with nuclear weapons, to prevent further PLA advances against the Guomindang across the strait.[51]

It was only due to extensive Soviet technology transfers, training and supplies that the PLA managed to modernize its navy and air defence network, allowing it to down multiple GMD and American aircraft.[52] As U.S. intelligence reports concluded "What the penetration flights did accomplish was to motivate the PRC leadership to more quickly build an air force and create an effective air defence system."[53] Reports concluded that by the late 1950s the PLA had succeeded in making U-2 and other enemy aircraft vulnerable, and created a highly potent multi-layered air defence network "with an air force that today ranks as one of the toughest to defeat."[54]

The PRC government announced in 1954 that eleven Americans had been shot down over the country in January 1953 during an "air drop of special agents into China and the Soviet Union." They were freed after two and a half years. Beijing went on to announce that its forces had killed 106 American and GMD agents who had parachuted into China between 1951 and 1954, and had captured 124 others. The CIA launched many other flights over China using high altitude U-2 spy planes, pilotless drones and other aircraft which continued until 1971 despite significant losses.[55]

In November 1952 Richard Fecteau and John Downey, who were flying combat teams into the mainland and dropping them supplies, were shot down. Beijing announced their capture and sentencing two years later. The U.S. State Department in turn claimed that the two men had been civilian employees of the U.S. Department of the Army in Japan who were presumed lost on a flight from Korea to Japan. They responded: "How these two men came into the hands of the Chinese Communists is unknown to the United States... the continued wrongful detention of these American citizens furnishes further proof of the Chinese Communist regime's disregard for accepted practices of international conduct."[56]

In December 1971 Fecteau was released shortly before President Richard Nixon's visit to Beijing. Downey was freed in March 1973 soon after the president publicly acknowledged him to be a CIA officer.[57] The CIA later itself confirmed that Fecteau and Downey had been paramilitary officers working for them.[58] According to the CIA, they had been "promoting domestic anti-government guerrilla operations. This was to be

accomplished by small teams of Chinese agents, generally inserted through airdrops, who were to link up with local guerrilla forces, collect intelligence and possibly engage in sabotage and psychological warfare, and report back by radio."[59] The U.S. itself was thus engaging in acts of war against China including bombings, killings, sabotage, militia incursions and support for drug lords in neighbouring countries, while blaming the country for "disregard for accepted practices of international conduct" when it countered these efforts.[60] Further American hostile actions against China, including many that were very significantly more threatening, were carried out on the Korean front.

Despite the substantial evidence supporting the PRC's claims to have been the victim of aggression, in March 1966 U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk stated in response: "At times the Communist Chinese leaders seem to be obsessed with the notion that they are being threatened and encircled." He spoke of China's "imaginary almost pathological, notion that the United States and other countries around its borders are seeking an opportunity to invade Mainland China and destroy the Peiping [Beijing] regime." He went on to say: "How much Peiping's [Beijing's] 'fear' of the United States is genuine and how much it is artificially induced for domestic political purposes only the Chinese Communist leaders themselves know. I am convinced, however, that their desire to expel our influence and activity from the western Pacific and Southeast Asia is not motivated by fears that we are threatening them."[61] Rusk's portrayal of the PRC was consistent with prevailing Western depictions of China and other party states, and it was only decades later when further information on U.S. operations against the PRC were declassified that his claims, and the conspiratorial narrative of unwarranted Chinese paranoia, were thoroughly disproven.

Continued U.S. credibility, despite having repeatedly carried out acts of aggression and committed lies to the record regarding operations against the PRC, was largely facilitated by America and its partners' far greater international standing and soft power built up over decades. Had China as a Western adversary committed these same acts itself, and its leading officials been exposed lying to conceal them, this would inevitably have been far better publicized internationally to form centre of narratives vilifying

the country and tarnishing its government's credibility for decades into the future.

Fighting China Through Korea

Following the defeat of the Guomindang on the Chinese mainland in 1949 calls grew in the United States for a large scale military assault to reverse the outcome of the Chinese Civil War and restore the country to the Western sphere of influence. On December 2, 1949, the *New York Times* published a story titled 'Senator Urges U.S. to Take Formosa,' a day after Senator Alexander Smith of New Jersey submitted a report to the Senate Foreign Relations. This was made after Smith's return from a fact-finding mission to East Asia, and carried a "recommendation that the United States send troops into Formosa [Taiwan] to occupy it indefinitely." Smith stated that his position had support from Commander of the Far East Command General Douglas MacArthur and "other military and naval authorities in the Orient," and would hardly have been an unprecedented move with the U.S. Military having four years prior seized and indefinitely occupied Okinawa which was not restored to Japan.[ii] The seizure would be paired with a blockade of the Chinese mainland. Smith and MacArthur led calls for military action against China, with others such as former president Herbert Hoover supporting similar calls for action.[62] State Secretary Dean Acheson, addressing the National Security Council, had highlighted as early as March 1949: "we must carefully conceal our ways to separate the island from mainland control," highlighting that the most effective means of achieving this remained "complete blockade [of the mainland] and occupation [of] Formosa."[63] U.S. officials also seriously considered overthrowing the Guomindang on Taiwan

ii The U.S. threatened to keep Okinawa permanently to threaten Tokyo not to conduct its foreign policy out of line with U.S. designs. ('Stationing American troops in Japan will lead to bloody tragedy – ex-PM of Japan,' *RT* (televised interview), November 6, 2016.)

to install a separatist government that could carve the territory out into a separate state.[iii]

While more moderate voices in Washington prevailed over the possibility of escalating the war against China, largely due to the widespread tendencies among the leadership to maintain a Eurocentric focus for viewing the Cold War, the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 seven months after the Chinese Civil War ended again made China a central target. The PRC saw its window for the recapture of Taiwan, prized for its strategic location and its considerable riches taken by the GMD, quickly close as war in Korea strengthened the positions of hardliners in Washington and made sustainment of Taiwan's separation[iv] an American policy which the U.S. Navy was deployed to enforce.[64] The territory was portrayed as valuable primarily to serve as a future bombing base against the Chinese mainland.[65] With the PLA having quickly taken Hainan Island in April, it had been expected that the GMD on Taiwan would fall by the end of the year. Sustaining a separate government on Taiwan claiming to rule over China also ensured that the Guomindang could hold China's permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council, with its continued existence as an alternative to the Beijing government allowing Washington to press client states worldwide not to recognize the PRC. This practice continued into the twenty-first century, with states continuing to recognize Taipei as China's seat of government threatened with repercussions by the U.S. should they instead recognize Beijing.[66] War in Korea also provided a pretext to retain extensive American bases in Japan despite Japanese public opposition, which

iii This possibility re-emerged when relations with Beijing worsened from the late 2010s, with U.S. officials beginning to refer to Taiwan as a separate country and form close ties with separatist forces in Taipei.

iv General MacArthur in particular had long advocated such policy, on the basis that Taiwan outside American influence would allow an adversary to deploy ten or twenty air groups, serve as a major forward operating base for submarines, and challenge Western control of shipping lanes and of Okinawa. He equated the importance of Taiwan as a base for aircraft alone to "ten or twenty aircraft carriers." (MacArthur, Douglas, *A Soldier Speaks: Public Papers and Speeches of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur*, New York, Praeger, 1965 (pp. 218–222).)

were perfectly situated to housing nuclear-capable bombers to target cities across China if needed.[67]

The Chinese leadership were startled by the news that war had broken out in Korea,[68] and the country had been in the process of downsizing its armed forces when the war began.[69] Seeking to avoid conflict, China refrained from supporting North Korean forces which, alongside a similar decision by the USSR, was widely seen by MacArthur and others to have proven pivotal in preventing them from totally routing the U.S.-led predominantly Western coalition that intervened in war's first three months. This seriously undermined arguments that the war's outbreak was a result of North Korean aggression as a proxy of Beijing and Moscow, as their decision to deny even supplies to the logistically strained North Korean forces had a very decisive impact on the outcome of the war's initial stages in favour of the U.S.[70] (see Chapter 6). Beijing also refrained from responding when, supposedly due to poor visibility and accidentally, American B-29s dropped bombs on Chinese territory in mid-August when attacking North Korean ports and railroads close to the border.[71] Multiple further unprovoked strikes on Chinese civilian targets near the Korean border by American fighters including train stations and fishing boats as well as an airfield, were met only with the filing of a protest to the UN Security Council.[72]

The deployment of a massive U.S.-led coalition force to Korea was seen as particularly threatening to China in light of the state of ongoing tensions with the United States, with growing signs that American hardliners would seek to expand the war into Chinese territory to reverse outcome of the Chinese Civil War and again impose a Western-aligned government. In the eyes of the Chinese leadership the placing of Korea and Taiwan under Western control had echoes of the past with the previous enemy, the Japanese Empire, having preceded its invasion of the Chinese mainland with efforts to take Korea and Taiwan.[73] Despite officially being a UN force, the coalition was notably placed under American command with General MacArthur, who had long strongly supported military action against China, made Supreme Commander.[74]

Even before the war's outbreak the possibility of an assault on China through Korea had been raised, with the U.S. ambassador in Seoul John Muccio observing regarding the U.S.-aligned armed forces of South Korea:

> *There is increasing confidence in the army. An aggressive, offensive spirit is emerging. Nerves that were frayed and jittery the past few months may now give way to this new spirit. A good portion of the Army is eager to get going. More and more people feel that the only way unification can be brought about is by moving north by force... Chiang Kaishek told [South Korean President Syngman] Rhee that the Nationalist [Guomindang] air force could support a move North and that they discussed the possibility of the Nationalists [GMD] starting an offensive move against Manchuria through Korea! There is some feeling that now is the time to move north while the Chinese communists are preoccupied.*[75]

The threat appeared more imminent still after MacArthur, acting without UN authorization, deployed the first U.S. forces for an invasion of North Korea on September 26 with the stated intention of absorbing it into the south under the U.S. client government of Sygnman Rhee. (See Chapter 6). MacArthur's strong interest in expanding the war into China to "roll back" communism made a coalition under his command fast approaching Chinese borders appear an imminent threat, and he was on record, alongside many in the Pentagon and State Department, as advocating using the momentum from the Korean conflict to take offensive action against China.[76] When asked whether China would join the war, MacArthur had notably replied: " I pray nightly that they will – would get down on my knees," which was hardly an isolated statement and is thought to have influenced him to provoke China on its Korean border.[77] The general would repeatedly advocate deploying sizeable Guomindang forces from Taiwan to the Korean front to participate in an American-led offensive,[78] which was also advocated by other American military leaders indicating a perception of the scope of the Korean War as encompassing the conflict in China as well.[79] Indeed, MacArthur had visited Taiwan shortly after the Korean War began and strongly implied an assault on the mainland was being considered.[80] These factors, combined with a demonstrated eagerness to advance northwards right up to the Chinese border where the risk of clashes with Chinese forces was known to be high, were highlighted by a several analysts as indicators of MacArthur's aggressive intentions towards China.[81]

On October 1, in an address at the first anniversary of the PRC's founding, Premier and Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai warned that his country would not "supinely tolerate" an invasion of North Korea. Beijing

nevertheless appeared eager to avoid war and would intervene only when its own territorial integrity was directly threatened. The CIA provided President Truman with a top-secret report on October 12 titled: *Threat of Full Chinese Intervention in Korea* (ORE 58-50) which stated to this effect: "Despite statements by Chou [Zhou] Enlai [and] troop movements to Manchuria... there are no convincing indications of an actual Chinese Communist intention to resort to full scale intervention in Korea." The agency report further noted: "Such action is not probable in 1950... the most favourable time for intervention in Korea has passed." The CIA observed, as many did at the time, that had China sought to support North Korea the provision of even limited material assistance in August before U.S. forces had strengthened their position on the peninsula could have decisively turned the tide – let alone a large manpower contribution.[82]

With the approach of U.S.-led forces Beijing feared for the security of its Manchurian industrial centres on the Korean border which included key power plants the two countries used jointly. Having spent thirteen years under the Japanese Empire, which had prioritized industrial development with impressive results, Manchuria was by far the most industrialized and developed area of China and a vital part of the national economy. A *New York Times* correspondent at the time pointed out that the Yalu River power plant on the border with Korea "has been supplying electrical power for the Manchurian industrialization program," which the Chinese regarded as their "pilot zone" for nationwide industrialization.[83] A detachment of Chinese infantry was thus deployed to form a thin buffer on the Korean border to protect industrial assets from approaching U.S.-led coalition forces. To avoid officially going to war with the coalition these forces were deployed under the Chinese People's Volunteer Army (PVA) – the thirteenth corps under General Peng Dehuai – rather the state's armed forces the People's Liberation Army.

Although fully aware of the presence of Chinese ground forces, U.S.-led coalition units continued to advance rapidly on MacArthur's command with Chinese concerns regarding the security of their borders or the industrial zone ignored. On October 16, General Peng reinforced border units by dispatching the 42nd Army of the PVA followed by troops from the 370th Regiment. This too failed to deter the coalition advance, and reports of

these deployments were notably censored from American media. As a result, when reports emerged that Chinese forces had been engaged in Korea, it was made to appear as if an act of Chinese aggression had taken place and the PVA had assaulted coalition forces from their side of the border. It was in fact coalition forces on October 25 which had approached Chinese lines, where the PVA had been known to be operating for over a week, close to the Sino-Korean border. The resulting battle ended in a Chinese victory, the complete disintegration of the South Korean 2nd Infantry Regiment, and the capture of two U.S. Army officers.[84] The defeat of these forward deployed units was insufficient to stall the advance of coalition forces, with the ten-day Battle of Unsan beginning on October 25 seeing two elite U.S. Cavalry regiments and supporting South Korean units routed and taking between 1680 and 2000 casualties – the vast majority of them American.[85] The PVA were estimated to have taken over 600 casualties.[86] Chinese forces sought to avoid escalation, and while they had proven effective in repelling hostile advances on their positions they still avoided actively engaging U.S. forces. They deployed Soviet-supplied MiG-15 fighters only for defensive patrols from November 1.

Seeking to negotiate peace in the aftermath of their overwhelming victory at Unsan, the PVA abruptly broke contact with coalition forces on November 5 rather than pressing their advantage with a pursuit. General MacArthur for his part, apparently aware of the importance of industrial assets on the Sino-Korean border, recommended the following day that the large Yalu River hydroelectric dam vital to the Manchurian economy should be bombed if China refused to withdraw its forces from Korea unconditionally.[87] Chinese de-escalation efforts were met with a positive response from the United Nations, with the UN Interim Committee on Korea issuing a statement on November 7 "to reassure the Chinese Communists regarding their interests on the Korean-Manchurian border." Beijing quickly responded and pulled its forces backwards,[88] which was widely interpreted by American analysts a move to reduce tensions at the expense of the PVA's own advantageous position in order to facilitate the opening of peace talks.[89]

MacArthur's[v] headquarters in Tokyo did not welcome these developments, and asserted that the PVA withdrawal must be taking place with the intention to "regroup large concentrations of... communist troops for a new onslaught rather than retreat." The withdrawal from combat had to be depicted as having aggressive intent.[90] This never materialized, with the PVA maintaining a defensive line which within two weeks had persuaded most of the American command that China's intentions were purely defensive. Staff members of the U.S. Eighth Army increasingly ascribed China's motive for intervention as nothing more than the protection of its industrial infrastructure.[91]

With the PVA having sacrificed the opportunity to press an offensive using the momentum from their prior victories, or to reinforce their forces in Korea with additional units, Beijing had engineered a lull in the fighting from which peace may well have emerged. By November 8 a Chinese delegation was set to arrive at peace talks with the United Nations, which would begin a week later on the 15th. For MacArthur, now close to the Chinese border and with what were widely perceived to be sufficient assets not only to expel the PVA from Korea, but to impose a new government in Beijing itself by force, a negotiated peace was far from welcome. Thus on November 8, just hours before the first round of peace talks, a new provocation was announced by a U.S. Air Force spokesman who stated: "an earlier ban against flights within three miles of Manchuria," put in place to avoid escalating conflict with China, had been lifted. "United States pilots in Korea are operating right up to the Chinese border along the Yalu River," he added, with a devastating attack quickly following on the Korean city of Sinuiju right on the Chinese border by seventy-nine B-29 Superfortress bombers carrying several hundred tons of ordinance. The city had 126,000

v MacArthur had underquoted the number of Chinese forces near the border to dismiss the possibility of serious intervention when moving forces up to the Yalu, and subsequently exaggerated the number of Chinese forces that did intervene drastically to justify his forces' defeats. The general consistently ignored signs of a possible Chinese intervention to dismiss warnings that his drive north was provocative, and when engagements begin he quickly took it as a pretext for an expanded war effort against the country. (Smith, Robert, *MacArthur in Korea: The Naked Emperor*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1982 (pp. 85-87, 195).)

inhabitants and 14,000 buildings, and housed light industries producing civilian goods such as soya, tofu, shoes, matches, salt and chopsticks.[92] The attack destroyed ninety percent of it using "rockets, demolition bombs, and 85,000 incendiaries,"[93] leaving scenes reminiscent of the firebombings across Japan five years prior. The U.S. ambassador to Seoul John Muccio stressed: "Similar devastating attacks are being mounted every day across the northern half of North Korea," with MacArthur stating that as a result "this area will be left a desert."[94]

MacArthur, it later emerged, had personally ordered the bombing of "every means of communication, every installation, factory, city and village" in North Korea on November 5, with strikes from then on making targets of the entire North Korean population.[95] American journalist I. F. Stone, assessing the policy of MacArthur's headquarters, the effect on the civilian population, and what he concluded were attempts by the supreme commander to quash prospects for a negotiated peace with China through provocation, reported:

> *Just when there was a lull in the fighting and it looked as if peace were possible, MacArthur staged a gigantic and murderous raid directly across from the Chinese frontier, destroying most of a city in an area where bombings had been forbidden to prevent border violations. He had gotten the Air Force to lift the bombing restriction – how, when or why nobody knows. Perhaps he did it by starting the raid first and asking permission afterwards... this is what he is reported to have done the very first week of the war, in forcing the President to 'allow' him to bomb north of the 38th parallel. 'There were reports,' the New York Times said, 'that General MacArthur had ordered the first bombings of North Korean cities without authorization from Washington'...*
>
> *Tokyo Headquarters, with or without connivance by Washington, ravaged a city when a truce was in prospect. It deliberately took action which might have provoked a third world war – when the Chinese, of whose intervention it complained, were withdrawing. That the military knew what they were doing is indicated by a short Associated Press dispatch from Seoul which was printed the same day as the news of the mass raid on Sinuiju. A United States Eighth Army spokesman said that 'Chinese Communist troops might be avoiding fighting in North Korea pending high level diplomatic moves that would affect the course of the Korean War.' This spokesman stated that the withdrawal of the Chinese in the northwest 'has been gradual over a four-day period' while in the northeast 'a Tenth Corps spokesman said the Chinese 184th Division was "in retreat" from the giant Changjin hydroelectric complex.' If the Chinese were even abandoning their dams, they must have wanted peace badly. Was the mass raid intended to goad*

> *them to war? The mass bombing raid on Sinuiju November 8 was the beginning of a race between peace and provocation.*[96]

The bombing of Sinuiju was far from the last apparent effort by MacArthur to prevent peace with China, and there was little doubt that war was his goal.[97] The general sabotaged a White House supported peace process in March 1951 by calling for an unconditional Chinese surrender just when talks were getting under way, with these terms clearly far detached from the realities on the ground which guaranteed they would be rejected by Beijing. MacArthur confirmed years later that he had deliberately done so to prevent those 'soft on communism' in Washington from pursuing a truce with China that would have otherwise granted Beijing a seat at the United Nations and potentially ended the separation of Taiwan.[98]

In the aftermath of the bombing of Sinuiju Beijing refrained from withdrawing from peace talks or beginning new offensives. Over two weeks after the PVA had broken contact with U.S. forces, the U.S. Army X Corps intelligence would report on November 22 that Chinese forces were "apparently preparing to make a defensive stand in his present positions," and that there was "no evidence to indicate any considerable number of [PVA] units have crossed the border since the initial reinforcement."[99] When British Prime Minister Clement Attlee and Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin presented a proposal to end the conflict and establish a buffer zone through North Korean territory[100] this was widely criticized in the United States and frequently likened to appeasing Nazi Germany.[101] General MacArthur, in particular, apparently seeking only a military solution which would end in America imposing its authority on and dictating terms to both Pyongyang and Beijing, voiced outrage, stating: "To yield to so immoral a proposition would bankrupt our leadership and influence in Asia and render untenable our position both politically and militarily."[102]

As Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Omar Bradley later observed, "the only possible means left to MacArthur to regain his lost pride and military reputation was now to inflict an overwhelming defeat on those Red Chinese generals who had made a fool of him. In order to do this, he was perfectly willing to propel us into an all-out war with Red China and possibly the Soviet Union."[103] MacArthur thus chose to press the offensive through provocation of the inoffensive adversary, continuing

to target PVA with bombs and incendiaries[104] and attempting to dispatch troops to the Chinese border – which the U.S. Army X Corps 7th Division briefly achieved on November 21.[105]

The PVA responded only with defensive manoeuvres, refraining from major counteroffensives, and on November 22 in a gesture of goodwill released twenty-seven wounded American prisoners of war to the care of the U.S. Army.[106] MacArthur responded with further escalation, launching an all-out assault on Chinese positions on November 24 involving hundreds of thousands of coalition forces – primarily U.S. Army I Corps and IX Corps divisions with limited British, Turkish and South Korean support. Despite immense coalition material advantages the offensive ended in disaster and succeeded only in wearing out of the patience of the Chinese and bringing a final end to prospects for an early negotiated solution without a full-scale military confrontation. The Chinese military leadership from that stage committed to the full recovery of northern Korea.

Having been devastated by a war with Japan, by a civil war, and by preceding decades of conflict both among warlords and with Western powers, China's manufacturing and military industrial bases were negligible failing to provide not only heavy weapons, aircraft or naval vessels, but even significant small arms.[107] The lack of transportation assets meant even when operating near their borders Chinese units often went into battle hungry, while the Americans had frozen turkeys flown in for thanksgiving.[108] The PVA was forced to rely either on weapons captured from Japanese imperial forces or those American weapons which had been sent as aid to the Guomindang,[109] and even basic equipment such as armoured vests gave U.S. forces a distinct advantage and reduced casualties by 30 percent.[110] The PVA's victories, despite significant numerical disadvantages and without armour, artillery or air support which the Americans had in abundance, thus surprised their adversaries – the first major victories by Chinese forces over Western armies in over a century and the first large battles waged by the forces of the new People's Republic.

At the pivotal Battle of Ch'ongch'on River from November 25 over 254,000 coalition forces faced 230,000 Chinese troops,[111] and saw the outnumbered and outgunned People's Volunteer Army achieve the destruction of the U.S. Eighth Army's right flank and effective collapse of the South

Korean II Corps.[112] The Eighth Army alone was estimated to have suffered over 11,000 casualties.[113] Retreating U.S.-led forces were ordered to stage a complete withdrawal from North Korean territory the day after the battle concluded on December 3.[114]

A simultaneous clash of two forces of over 100,000 troops each at Chosin Reservoir also ended in an overwhelming Chinese and North Korean victory against overwhelming odds, with the U.S. deploying tremendous air power and its infantry being better equipped for extreme winter fighting which should have alone been decisive.[115] The PVA prevailed despite severe food shortages and some 90 percent of its personnel involved suffering some form of frostbite – causing thousands of non-combat casualties.[116] British Military Historian Max Hastings compared the collapse of the divisions of the U.S. Eighth Army to the French military collapse in 1940 and the British loss of Singapore in 1942, writing:

> *Most Americans expected Chinamen to be dwarves, but they found themselves assaulted by units which included men six feet and over. Yet the enemy wreaking such havoc with the Eighth Army was still, essentially, fighting a large-scale guerrilla war devoid of all the heavy firepower every Western army considered essential. It was a triumph not merely for the prestige of Communism, but for that of an Asian army... From [General Walton] Walker's headquarters to Tokyo [command centre] and on to the Joint Chiefs' offices in the Pentagon, there was bewilderment and deep dismay about the collapse of the Eighth Army. For public consumption, the sheer surprise and weight of the Chinese offensive were emphasized. But professional soldiers knew that these were not enough to explain the headlong rout of an army that still possessed absolute command of sea and air, and firepower on a scale the communists could not dream of. The Chinese victories were being gained by infantry bearing small arms and regimental support weapons – above all mortars. The Americans had been subjected to very little artillery fire, and no air attack whatsoever.*[117]

American Lieutenant Colonel Roy E. Appleman wrote regarding the ability of Chinese forces to engage U.S. and other allied troops in a climate more extreme than the Battle of Stalingrad despite significant material disadvantages:

> *Looking at the other side of the hill... one cannot withhold some admiration, and humanitarian sympathy, for the Chinese peasants who made such great effort and sacrifice in trying to carry out their orders. One must say of them that Sung's IX Army Group*

> *did some spectacular things. It fought without air support, it had no tanks or artillery and almost no heavy mortars, it had poor and almost nonexistent ammunition after the first day or two of battle and no food or ammunition resupply once it crossed the Yalu River... and it possessed no adequate footgear for the feet or mitten for the hands of its soldiers in an arctic clime... In fact, the operations were a mismatch of a fine modern, mechanized body of soldiery against a peasant army of light infantry – but one that was highly mobile and expert at night fighting. The best weapons the Chinese possessed were the American Thompson sub-machine guns, 81mm mortars, grenades, and rifles they had captured from Chiang Kaishek's armies... Yet they did drive the X Corps completely out of northeast Korea and occupied and held henceforth that part of the country. No American troops ever returned there.*[118]

Facing decisive defeats, the use of nuclear weapons began to be more actively considered in Washington as President Truman confirmed on November 30.[119] Indeed, as early as July just days into the war MacArthur had been calling for the Pentagon to consider nuclear strikes on North Korea.[120] As a result nonnuclear components for nuclear bombs were flown to Guam for storage, which would allow nuclear strikes to be employed within seventy-two hours should the White House authorize it.[121] Contingency plans were also made for a total American withdrawal from Korea and continuing a campaign from offshore islands to weaken the country over time – as would be done to China.[122]

American officers repeatedly stressed that the fact the Chinese had won despite such tremendous material disadvantages, particularly a lack of artillery or air support, was humiliating for the U.S. and its coalition partners.[123] MacArthur's headquarters responded to its forces' routing "by suddenly imposing censorship regulations far more severe than any known in World War II," with even speculation as to the reasons for censorship strictly forbidden, which allowed it to downplay prior and any future defeats.[124]

The performance of Chinese forces on the ground from November 1950 stunned the West,[125] undermining prevailing conceptions of Western superiority. As Max Hastings observed: "The undoubted Chinese skills as tacticians, night-fighters, navigators, masters of fieldcraft and camouflage, caused even many senior [U.S.] officers to forget the enemy's huge disadvantages in resources and firepower." Leaders of U.S.-led coalition forces "found themselves facing the stark fact that, man for man, most of their troops were proving nowhere near as hardy, skilful, and determined upon

the battlefield as their communist opponents. It is difficult to overestimate the psychological effects of this conclusion upon strategic and tactical decision-making."[126]

U.S. Army reports consistently highlighted the prowess of Chinese forces despite their total lack of warships or air support, inferior communications equipped, and lack of meaningful firepower.[127] They bore a stark contrast to references by Eighth Army commander General Matthew Ridgway to American personnel as "pampered troops."[128] He noted "the unwillingness of the army to forgo certain creature comforts, its timidity about getting off the scanty roads, its reluctance to move without radio and telephone contact, and its lack of imagination in dealing with a foe whom they so outmatched in fire-power and dominated in the air and on the surrounding seas."[129]

The United States Military was forced into the longest retreat in its history,[130] although Beijing continued diplomatic efforts which included major releases of American prisoners. A notable example of prevailing conduct came on December 3 when four British soldiers saw their weapons carrier stall north of Pyongyang and, expecting capture or death, instead saw the PVA help them push their truck and restart their engine. An English-speaking Chinese soldier reassured them: "We don't want to hurt you guys. We just want you to get off the peninsula."[131] Captured American personnel were similarly at times allowed to return to their own lines, in part because the poorly supplied Chinese were often in no position to take prisoners nor disposed to committing war crimes by killing those they apprehended.[132] Assessment of reports from both sides indicates such actions were not reciprocated.

Chinese Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai had implied to Indian ambassador K. M. Panikkar, who served as a conduit for messages between Beijing and Washington, that while China was "eager to know the whole opinion of the USA and the UN regarding conditions for an armistice," it would continue its offensive until the U.S. was willing to begin peace talks. Beijing's patience had been thoroughly tested the month before, and with the U.S. refusing opportunities for peace presented by China, Britain and the UN, a further offensive was perhaps the only means by which to force the Americans to reach an accommodation.[133]

Supreme Commander MacArthur persistently called for nuclear attacks and on December 9, 1950, following a string of major Chinese victories, he requested authority to conduct them. Fifteen days later he submitted a list of targets across both northern Korea and China for twenty-six nuclear strikes eighteen of which would hit industrial centres. The plan was not approved by Washington.[134] Described by British military historian Max Hastings as "instilled with a yearning for crude revenge upon the people who had brought all his hopes and triumphs in Korea to nothing," this likely influenced MacArthur's willingness to employ nuclear weapons.[135] The supreme commander was far from isolated, however, with a Joint Chiefs of Staff committee having previously recommended the use of nuclear arms against Chinese forces.[136]

While in the final months of 1950 Chinese forces ensured that Western armies were pressed far from their borders never to again return so far north, the threat to Chinese territory re-emerged during the war from a possible Western bombing campaign based on those which had recently ravaged all of North Korea and five years prior had levelled sixty-nine Japanese cities. Defeats at the hands of his East Asian adversaries led Supreme Commander MacArthur to propose more extreme escalation including contaminating northern Korea and northeast China with a "radioactive by-product cordon," rendering territory uninhabitable for generations and devastating all life for many miles if seen through.[137] On February 22, he urged the Joint Chiefs of Staff to support anti-government insurgents in China and to make preparations for an eventual landing of Guomindang forces with American support near Shanghai as part of a larger invasion force.[138] On March 10, 1951, MacArthur asked for "D-Day atomic capability" demanding that up to fifty nuclear weapons be dropped on northeast China. At the end of March atomic bomb loading pits at Kadena Air Base on Okinawa were operational,[139] with bombs intended to target military facilities and industrial centres in China.[140]

In the first week of April MacArthur's proposal for a Guomindang landing and invasion of China received strong endorsements from the House of Representatives.[141] On April 5 the Joint Chiefs of Staff gave MacArthur authority to use nuclear weapons,[142] and ordered nuclear attacks against bases in northeast China if large numbers of new PVA troops

entered the theatre or if bombers were launched against American assets from there. Mk. 4 nuclear capsules were transferred to the Air Force's 9th Bomb Group designated to carry nuclear weapons which was authorized by President Truman who signed an order to use them against Chinese and Korean targets. As it was China did not deploy substantial new forces or bombers, but the orders given in the U.S. brought the world to possibly its closest point to nuclear war since 1945. The nuclear warheads would remain deployed within bombing range of Korea and in military hands.[143]

Although MacArthur was dismissed on April 11, seventeen days later President Truman increased deployments of nuclear-configured bombers to East Asia and authorized reconnaissance flights over airfields in northeast China to obtain targeting data for potential strikes.[144] U.S. envoys conveyed that MacArthur's dismissal did not mean that Washington had ruled out nuclear strikes on China,[145] and nuclear threats continued throughout the remainder of the war.

As hostilities stabilized around the 38th parallel dividing the two Koreas, an impasse in negotiations emerged after the U.S. sought to impose terms on the repatriation of prisoners which seriously violated the Geneva conventions and international norms, namely that for political reasons it would not return a large portion of Chinese prisoners (see Chapter 7). To force its adversaries to accept their terms expanded strategic bombing, and the threat to expand further to target Chinese population centres, was key. As early as June 1951 State Secretary George Marshal had considered recommending that Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai be warned that nuclear strikes on China would be the outcome if negotiations continued to stall.[146] The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended lifting restrictions on bombing China, which the State Department and the British supported.[147]

Defence Secretary Robert Lovett was a leading advocate of using strategic bombing to force concessions, stating: "If we can stay firm [in our terms for negotiation] we can tear them up by air. We are hurting them badly... If we keep on tearing the place apart, we can make it a most unpopular affair for the North Koreans. We ought to go right ahead."[148] Stalling negotiations saw the American military leadership again threaten to send Guomindang forces to the Korean front in May 1952, which had long been associated with a continuation of the Chinese Civil War and implied

an extension of the war to Chinese territory as was Taipei's final goal. In October General Mark Clark, who had been appointed as the coalition's new supreme commander five months prior, advocated an offensive deeper into North Korea and addition of three Guomindang divisions paired with an expansion of the bombing campaign across China.[149] Clark advocated using strategic attacks to force concessions, and oversaw an intensification of the bombardment of North Korea's civilian infrastructure under Operation Pressure Pump from July 1952.[150] With the Chinese and North Koreans lacking comparable air assets, and the U.S. mainland in any case well out of range, they could not apply similar pressure.

Chair of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff George Kennan advocated bombing of targets in south and central China to force Beijing to agree to American terms.[151] On May 19, 1952 the Joint Chiefs recommended nuclear strikes on North Korean targets as a warning to Beijing and to force concessions. The CIA was tasked at this time with spreading rumours that the U.S. planned to expand their bombing campaign to China if American demands were not met.[152] Threats of expanded firebombing attacks and escalation to nuclear war were made more credible by the presence of nuclear warheads in Okinawa from April 1951, as well as the initiation of Operation Hudson Harbor which saw dud nuclear bombs dropped on North Korea as part of simulated nuclear strikes.[153]

A threat to intensify the conflict up to and including initiating nuclear strikes against Chinese population centres overhung the entire negotiating process, and escalated from January 1953 under the new Dwight D. Eisenhower administration.[154] China's state newspaper the *People's Daily* announced three days after Eisenhower's inauguration that the new president was considering blockading Chinese coasts, supporting a Guomindang offensive and carrying out nuclear strikes against northeast China.[155] On February 2 Eisenhower announced that the neutralization of the Taiwan Strait was over, freeing the Guomindang to attack the Chinese mainland,[156] with the announcement accompanied by a massive increase in American military aid to Taipei.[157] This was a particularly critical threat considering that Chinese forces were already so overstrained, and the fact that Guomindang forces would be protected from retaliation by the vast U.S. military presence which remained on and around Taiwan.

Even in the Korean War's opening days General Eisenhower had suggested that the Pentagon ought to "consider the use of one or two atomic bombs" in Korea, and as president he would continue to consider uses for the new weapon.[158] On March 27, 1953, Eisenhower and his secretary of state John Foster Dulles agreed "that somehow or other the taboo which surrounds the use of atomic weapons would have to be destroyed." Dulles stated that "in the present state of world opinion, we could not use an A-bomb, we should make every effort now to dissipate this feeling."[159] Eisenhower had called for nuclear strikes from the war's outset,[160] and as president was interested in using them against PVA fortifications in Korea. He subsequently called for nuclear strikes including "hitting them hard and wherever it would hurt most, including Peiping [Beijing] itself" as part of an "all-out war against Communist China."[161]

On May 13, 1953, the U.S. began attacks on irrigation dams near the Chinese border. The official U.S. Air Force history claimed two of these were the most devastating air operations of the entire war and "portended the devastation of the most important segment of the North Korean agricultural economy."[162] The damming infrastructure was the second largest in the world, and provided electricity to much of China. A week later on May 20 the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended initiating "air and naval operations directly against China and Manchuria" and "a coordinated offensive to seize a position generally at the waist of Korea" – making clear that nuclear strikes would need to be employed "on a sufficiently large scale to ensure success."[163] On May 22 State Secretary Dulles conveyed to Beijing that the war would be expanded to Chinese territory unless U.S. terms for armistice were acceded to.[164] U.S. ambassador to the USSR Charles Bohlen conveyed a similar message through Moscow on May 28.[165] The Chinese and North Koreans assented to American terms shortly afterwards, with the resulting armistice agreement reflecting America's success in gaining very extensive one-sided concessions.

State Secretary Dulles stated five months after the armistice signing that "it was the [adversary's] knowledge of the U.S. willingness to use force that broke hostilities," referring to the fact that America was "prepared for a much more intensive scale of warfare."[166] In April 1954 Dulles more publicly stated that the American position was advanced due to Beijing's

realization that if it failed to comply, air attacks on northeast China would be initiated.[167] President Eisenhower himself asserted without hesitation when asked how the war had ended that it had been due to: "Danger of an atomic war... We told them we could not hold it to a limited war any longer if the communists welched on a treaty of truce. They didn't want a full-scale atomic attack."[168] Eisenhower came to the same conclusion in his memoirs.[169] The fact that the armistice was concluded so shortly after an escalation of nuclear threats against Chinese territory convinced the Eisenhower administration that the ability to issue such threats could be key to resolving future crises.[170] The American nuclear threat would only grow after the Korean War's end, and by the early 1960s thousands of warheads were deployed across Northeast Asia aimed primarily at China. U.S. strategic warfare plans at the time stipulated targeting 78 Chinese cities with "full force" nuclear bombardment which would kill an estimated 107 million people.[171]

Both China and years later North Korea would emphasize the importance of developing a long-range strike capability with nuclear weapons after the Korean War in order to ensure mutual vulnerability with the United States and prevent themselves from being targeted while unable to retaliate as they had been during the war. A Chinese Scientific Association spokesman stated to this effect regarding the nature of negotiations with the United States: "Only when we ourselves have the atomic weapon, and are fully prepared, is it possible for the frenzied warmongers to listen to our just and reasonable proposals [for ending the war]."[172] The state newspaper *People's Daily* similarly emphasized that America's "atomic militarism" needed a Chinese nuclear deterrent to contain it.[173]

'Promoting Disintegration From Within': Supporting Insurgency to Destabilize China

After October 1949, but particularly from late 1950 as Chinese and Western forces began to do battle in Korea, the United States began to

invest heavily in creating and strengthening insurgencies within China to weaken the state internally. This was seen as a means of further straining Chinese resources in parallel to the war effort against it in Korea.[174] The CIA airline CAT played an important role in dropping agents into the Chinese mainland in close coordination with Guomindang forces on Taiwan,[175] and in April 1951 the CIA began to invest in parallel efforts to destabilize China through support for insurgency independently of the Guomindang. Operatives recruited through Hong Kong and trained in Japan and on Saipan were inserted through bases in South Korea, although a lack of support from the Chinese public limited the effectiveness of such efforts.[176] The U.S. National Security Council advocated continued support for such efforts, hoping to set off waves of defections that could destabilize China from within.[177] While the Pentagon leadership intended to support "sparking a coordinated anti-communist resistance movement throughout China," however, CIA and Guomindang efforts consistently failed.[178]

The Korean War was a turning point for U.S. efforts to overthrow the Chinese government not only by increasing the perceived urgency of doing so, but also because the capabilities of Chinese forces on the ground even when fighting beyond their borders with strained logistics made the prospects of a military victory through invasion appear slim. Where previously it was assumed that Chinese forces, much like was assumed of the Japanese and North Koreans before them, would quickly crumble in the face Western military power, their ability to more than hold their own against a vast U.S.-led coalition forced a major shift in perceptions. Chinese air units had also made a strong impression in Korea, causing such heavy losses among U.S. bombers as to force them to operate only at night – something it was noted the Germans and Japanese had never achieved.[179] As U.S. Director of Central Intelligence and Second Air Force Chief of Staff General Vandenburg had stated when Chinese air units[vi] began to

vi The Korean War was hardly the last time Chinese and U.S. aircraft clashed. By 1965 U.S. violations of southern Chinese airspace from offensive operations against North Vietnam increased significantly, and the prior Chinese policy of only monitoring such violations was abandoned. Within a year they reportedly shot down 12 and damaged four manned U.S. aircraft as well as 20 drones. (Rupprecht, Andreas,

operate, "a significant and, by some standards, even sinister change has occurred... Almost overnight China has become one of the major air powers of the world... the air supremacy upon which we have relied in the past is now faced with a serious challenge."[180]

As a result of China's new military capabilities, as well as growing signs of support from the new nuclear weapons state the Soviet Union which deployed its own forces on Chinese territory,[181] destabilizing the country from within became the focus of U.S. efforts against Beijing. Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Walter Robinson stated to this effect: "our hope of solving the problem of the mainland of China was not through attack on the mainland but rather by actions which would promote disintegration from within."[182] As part of broader efforts to achieve this, Washington moved to leverage the sizeable Tibetan separatist movement to undermine both China's internal security and its international image.

Tibet had been part of China for over two centuries, and due to the Guomindang's alignment with Western interests its sovereignty over the territory had never been questioned. Washington's pre-1949 policy on Tibet was clarified as follows: "The Government of the United States has borne in mind the fact that the Chinese Government has long claimed sovereignty over Tibet and that the Chinese constitution lists Tibet among areas constituting the territory of the Republic of China. This Government has at no time raised a question regarding either of these claims."[183] This changed very quickly after the GMD's defeat and founding of the PRC. Having previously refused requests from Tibetan separatist forces for assistance in obtaining independence, the United States would within weeks of the civil war's end move to capitalize on their existence as a potential asset. On November 1, 1949, President Truman called for "modern weapons and sufficient advisors" to be sent to separatist forces.[184] Just days before the outbreak of the Korean War in June the following year, Secretary of State Dean Acheson stated that Britain and the United States were jointly exploring means to "encourage Tibetan resistance to Commie control."[185] The Tibetan separatist leader the 14th Dalai Lama himself wrote years

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Modern Chinese Warplanes: Chinese Air Force – Combat Aircraft and Units, Houston, Harpia, 2018 (p. 17).)

later that Western support for Tibetan separatism came "not because they cared about Tibetan independence, but as part of their worldwide efforts to destabilize all communist governments" – hence why this support came abruptly from October 1949 and not before.[186]

Alongside pledges of material assistance President Truman also initiated a program which made extensive use of America's considerable control of information globally "to organize the moral forces of the world against the immoral" by fostering global support for the Tibetan separatist cause. John F. Avedon, a high level American associate of the Tibetan separatist leadership, stated regarding this support: "For its part the United Stated pledged to support [the Dalai Lama] and his government abroad, reintroduce Tibet's cause in the United Nations and finance its struggle against China including, if it developed, a military option."[187] Media organizations serving to promote U.S. interests were instrumental in supporting the campaign, key examples being the CIA-financed and staffed Congress of Cultural Freedom which had established both the London-based *China Quarterly* and *Quest*. These played central roles in supporting the Tibetan separatist movement and vilifying the Chinese republic. The CIA and European intelligence agencies later jointly set up the International Commission of Jurists, whose respectable names and claims to represent objective findings of reputable jurists provided the appearance of credibility to articles condemning Chinese actions in the harshest possible language. The commission's reports were heavily based on interviews with the CIA-funded Tibetan separatist leadership, and would go on to form the basis of the international campaign supporting Tibetan separatism.[188] These efforts escalated after 1950 to keep pressure on China following the Korean War's end. A four-day conference between U.S. intelligence and the Tibetan separatist leadership in 1955 saw a ten-year joint plan laid out to end Beijing's rule over Tibet – fragmenting the new People's Republic in line with Western interests.[189]

In the mid-1950s the CIA began a program to recruit and train Tibetan exiles in neighbouring India and Nepal. Among them were members of the Dalai Lama's guard and others who had already engaged in guerrilla activity against the Chinese government. They were flown to a military base in the mountains of Colorado in the U.S., where the high altitudes simulated

those of their homeland, to be trained in guerrilla warfare. After training they were infiltrated back into China through neighbouring countries. As noted in Harvard's *Journal of Cold War Studies*: "The first group of Tibetan rebels was secretly brought to Saipan for training in December 1956. The trainees were then sent back to Tibet in 1957 to help the Tibetan rebels to establish contacts with the CIA and to join the resistance themselves. Available Chinese sources give no indication that the Chinese Communists were aware of America's secret involvement in promoting the rebellion in Tibet during this period." Through these guerrillas, the CIA had another proxy force with which to bleed China out.[190]

Once in China the guerrillas would sabotage infrastructure, mine roads, cut communications lines and ambush PLA forces – a stark contrast to the image of pacifist Tibetan resistance widely propagated by Western media. Their operations were supported by CIA aircraft and at times led by CIA contracted mercenaries. Extensive support facilities were constructed in northeast India, and by some estimates 14,000 Tibetan militants were being armed, fed and equipped by the CIA by 1960.[191] In 1961 the *New York Times* discovered the secret Colorado training operation, but acceded to a Pentagon request not to investigate. The CIA's 1947 charter and the U.S. Congress' interpretation of it had limited the agency's domestic operations to information collection, but they had overstepped this line on several counts of which this was but one example. Only because the *Times* collaborated with the government could this remain a secret.[192] Several short illustrated books were also written at facilities in Colorado in colloquial Tibetan that "beautifully demonstrate[d] the convergence of Tibetan political projects and American imperial guidance" while seeking to build up anti-Chinese and anti-communist sentiments.[193]

Alongside clandestine operations under the cover names of St Circus and St Barnum, which respectively trained Tibetan guerrillas and airlifted CIA agents and military supplies to Tibet, operation St Bailey was undertaken as an extensive classified propaganda campaign among Tibetan communities to foster anti-Chinese, anti-communist and separatist thinking.[194] The U.S. State Department described the objectives of its propaganda in Tibet as follows:

> *In the political action and propaganda field, Tibetan program objectives are aimed toward lessening the influence and capabilities of the Chinese regime through support, among Tibetans and among foreign nations, of the concept of an autonomous Tibet under the leadership of the Dalai Lama; toward the creation of a capability for resistance against possible political developments inside Tibet; and the containment of Chinese Communist expansion – in pursuance of U.S. policy objectives.*[195]

Through such programs the United States could manipulate potential Tibetan recruits by vilifying the Chinese government and nurturing their unlikely dream of 'freeing' their homeland under a separate state. The great irony was that the establishment of the People's Republic of China freed many in Tibet in a far more direct way. 98 percent of Tibetans had previously been enslaved in serfdom, with the population having a status equivalent to property of the ruling lamas and landowners, forced to tolerate rapes, and having their eyes gouged or their legs crippled as common punishments for disobedience. The status of women was such that they were bought and sold as property. This system was abolished under the Communist Party of China which ended serfdom, emancipated women, and oversaw a sudden surge in literacy rates and life expectancy with hospitals and schools quickly built in every major settlement.[196] These changes were set to be reversed should the separatist leadership which the U.S. was supporting gain control of the territory.

American intelligence documents published in 1998 revealed considerable details of operations against China in the 1950s as well as the Dalai Lama's close co-operation with the CIA – without which he almost certainly would have remained in China rather than supporting a campaign against it from exile.[197] Tibetan separatist combatants were revealed to have received generous funding, with a 1964 memorandum giving precise sums showing that the primary expenses were supporting militants in Nepal, covert training in Colorado, black air transportation and a $180,000 annual personal subsidy to the Dalai Lama. Use of Tibetan separatists to establish a spy network to gain information on Chinese government activities, possibly on the coinciding Chinese nuclear program, was also detailed.[198] Other reports indicated that the CIA had armed a sizeable force of 14,000 Tibetan militiamen, providing both training and a wide variety

of armaments from silencers to rocket propelled grenades and mortars, while regularly dropping supplies from bases in Thailand.[199]

Funding Tibetan fighters and saboteurs benefited only those powers which sought to weaken the Chinese state, while both the Tibetan minority and China as a whole suffered from conflict. As the fourteenth Dalai Lama himself concluded, co-operation with the CIA "only resulted in more suffering for the people of Tibet."[200] Although the United States could achieve its objectives of further draining Chinese resources through proxy war, while itself incurring minimal costs and minimal losses, the campaign nevertheless failed to seriously destabilize Tibet as intended due to lack of support from the large majority of the Tibetan population. Attempts to spark armed uprisings consequentially consistently failed, with U.S. trained agents frequently turned in to authorities by the Tibetan people themselves.[201] This forced the CIA to stage multiple emergency evacuations of leading separatist figures.[202]

In parallel to efforts to foster an insurgency in Tibet, China's Muslim-majority province of Xinjiang was also seen as a potential centre of insurgent activity. The USSR warned the Chinese communist leadership in 1949 that Western powers would try to "activate the Muslims... to continue the civil war against the communists."[203] The CIA's leading operative in Xinjiang's capital Urumqi, Douglas Mackiernan, had been working out of the Urumqi consulate under State Department cover. As the PLA moved into the area and local garrisons quickly switched support to Beijing, Mackiernan filled a jeep with guns, grenades, several hundred gold bars and ten thousand dollars and relocated to Tibet where prospects for a successful insurgency were seen to be greater.[204] There was no major insurgency in the region despite the CIA and Guomindang exploring the possibility extensively, although decades later from the 1990s it would become a hotspot for Western and Turkish backed Islamist extremist groups to wage war on China from within after focus shifted away from Tibet.[205]

While the Chinese Civil War concluded in 1949, for the CIA and for many in Washington the war on China never ended. The continuation of hostilities had significant impacts on Chinese political and social development, and with the war-weary nation never truly allowed peace the free and open society and approachable leadership described by political

analyst John Service when he led the American delegation to the Chinese communists in 1944 could never last. Why would anyone who approached the PRC's leaders not be a CIA mercenary or Formosan assassin? Would government critics truly be acting in the nation's interest, or were they promoting subversion in the interests of a foreign power? The immense scale of the security threat thus necessitated precautions which compromised public freedom – albeit to a far lesser extent that the alternative of softness in the face of foreign aggression would have. Despite its significant economic achievements, due to the war being waged against it the PRC could not develop to its full potential and into the free society which could have been an attractive model to much of Asia. While Western sources sought to cast Beijing as needlessly repressive and paranoid, the context of the military incursions and threats as persistent as they were severe, which the state faced ever since its formation, cast the Chinese security state in a different light entirely.

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CHAPTER 4

The Rise and Fall of an Independent Indonesia: A Twenty-Year War Effort to Restore Western Control

> It is necessary to expose the false propaganda of the imperialists and thoroughly dispel the illusion that the imperialists will give up their colonies and dependent countries with good will.[1]
>
> – Kim Il Sung

> To me, both the [American] Declaration of Independence and the Communist Manifesto contain underlying truths, but the West doesn't permit a middle road.[2]
>
> – Sukarno

Fighting for Independence: A European Possession No Longer

Japanese victories over European empires in the Pacific from 1941 marked the beginning of the end of the colonial era in Southeast Asia, ending centuries of Western control including over 350 years of Dutch and British rule in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. While Indonesia had at times accounted for half of the Netherlands' national income, the local population had suffered immensely under Dutch rule with farmers forcibly enlisted en-masse to grow cash crops at fixed prices to enrich the empire while themselves barely subsisting. Harsh Dutch retribution against rebellion included ethnically cleansing entire island civilizations – acts of genocide – to suppress dissent and ensure continued profits. The most prominent early example was the 1621 Bandanese Massacre under Dutch Governor-General Jan Pieterszoon Cohen to enforce monopoly over the

Banda Islands' lucrative spice trade. Cohen's men "killed anyone that they didn't think would make a good slave, then exported the rest, reducing the islands' population of 15,000 to a few hundred souls." The islands were subsequently resettled by slaves and convicts, while Cohen was rewarded with 3,000 guilders for his elimination of the Bandanese people.[3]

After occupying Indonesia from March 1942, the Japanese Empire provided the support necessary for Indonesian nationalists to strengthen their movement and form an independent government and parliament. Nationalist groups such as Budi Utomo, the Indonesian National Party, Sarekat Islam and the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) had all long sought independence, and by breaking the centuries-old European hold on the country Japan's three-and-a-half-year occupation gave independence groups a chance to gather their forces and organize wider public support.

Indonesian nationalists saw the pan-Asian Japanese Empire as a potential ally, while Japan in turn, unlike in Manchuria and Korea, did not intend to remake Indonesia in its own image, place it indefinitely under its rule, or integrate it to the same extent into the empire. Ending Western rule and ensuring a supply of raw materials such as rubber and oil were instead prioritized. As a result Japanese conduct in much of Indonesia was starkly different to that in other regions, and many nationalist groups went on to co-operate closely with the Japanese. Although Indonesia's population suffered under Japan's occupation, the period played a vital role in furthering the cause of independence from Western empire.

Imperial Japanese forces were welcomed as liberators in much of Indonesia, with many central islands seeing their arrival as the fulfilment of an ancient prophecy of Jayabaya. This had predicted a brutal and lengthy occupation by outsiders ending only with the coming of liberators descended from Indonesians themselves.[4] The Japanese were believed to have centuries old Indonesian ethnic roots – which may be the reason or their common Polynesian linguistic and early architectural influences and shared cultural concepts such as that of the sacral monarchy descended from the sun. Japanese soldiers were at times greeted with fruit and addressed with reverence, and Japanese General Hitoshi Imamura would later recall the sweet taste of coconut water and his affection for the local population.

Leading Indonesian nationalist figures Mohammad Hatta and Sukarno had foreseen that an expanding Japanese Empire could aid their cause.[5] As Sukarno had said after being approached by the Japanese for support in governance: "Yes, Independent Indonesia can only be achieved with Dai Nippon."[6] Japanese support in Java and Sumatra elevated nationalist leaders, with new Indonesian run state institutions created along with the economic and political infrastructure contrasting with the previous system where the bureaucracy was overwhelmingly run by Europeans. Often well educated, nationalist figures who had been political prisoners were employed in large numbers as administrators under Japan. The Japanese were effectively fostering Indonesian independence, while in Korea and China they were at the same time brutally suppressing such movements. The cause of Indonesian independence was not seen as a threat to Japanese dominance in East Asia, but rather as an assets directed against European imperial interests. With Japan seeking to remake Indonesia as a friendly self-governing member of the East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, the goals of the nationalists strongly aligned with their own.

While there was little resistance to Japanese rule, some leftist elements led by political activist Amir Sjarifuddin attempted to organize an underground resistance movement. Sjarifuddin and his associates were quickly discovered and captured by Japanese forces, although Sukarno was able to successfully appeal to prevent their executions.[7] Other resistance came from Islamist elements which saw the end of Dutch rule as an opportunity to establish a Sharia based Islamic state.

On September 7, 1944, eleven months before the end of the war, Japanese Prime Minister General Kuniaki Koiso promised Indonesia its independence in the near future. On April 29, 1945, Japan allowed for the establishment of an Indonesian parliament which represented most of the vast territory's ethnic groups. Sukarno was appointed as its head and discussions regarding the future formation of an Indonesian state were encouraged. Sukarno spoke out strongly against fascism, particularly as practiced Nazi Germany, and ideas of racial purity, claiming that all humanity had equal rights to contribute to world peace. This too was tolerated, and so long as Indonesia maintained its stance against Western imperialism and

supplied Japan with raw materials the nationalist leadership were free to shape the country as they saw fit.

In August 1945 Indonesia was granted further powers for self-government, allowing the formation of the Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence tasked with creating the structure of a future state on August 7. Two days later Sukarno, Hatta and Wediodiningrat, the committee's leading nationalist members, met with Commander-in-Chief of Japan's Southern Expeditionary Forces Hisaichi Terauchi in Vietnam. There he authorized them to proceed with preparations for Indonesian independence and guaranteed no Japanese interference.

Two days after the Japanese Empire surrendered on August 15, 1945, Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta declared Indonesia an independent republic. On the 18th the Central Indonesian National Committee elected Sukarno as the first president and Hatta as vice president, with many in the Japanese military leadership such as Admiral Tadashi Maeda supporting this development. As news of independence spread to the outer islands, nationalist pro-republican sentiment increased throughout the country.

While Japanese forces were required under the terms of surrender to hand over their weapons and transfer governance to European colonial forces, they often instead handed them to the Indonesians. Having expected a wartime Western invasion,[i] the Japanese military had helped create and arm Indonesian paramilitaries such as the Giyugun and Heiho forces, with their willingness to do so reflecting a high degree of trust in local nationalist movement. As Japan had surrendered before a Western invasion could be launched, there were substantial Japanese weapons and equipment available for use throughout the ensuing independence war which served as a major asset for the new republic.

Sukarno's government gained support from several local leaders such as the King of Bona and many of the Balinese Rajas, although several Rajas

i Commander of U.S. forces in the Pacific General Douglas MacArthur had strongly advocated invading Indonesia with Australian support to restore Dutch colonial rule, and cited Washington's unwillingness to do so as the cause for the Netherlands' subsequent struggles restoring control which he strongly lamented. (Smith, Robert, *MacArthur in Korea: The Naked Emperor*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1982 (pp. 73, 74).)

from outer islands who had acquired vast personal fortunes under Dutch rule opposed the independence movement. Parts of eastern Indonesia formed the short-lived State of East Indonesia which sought compromise with Dutch designs to reimpose its rule and form a new state under the Dutch monarchy. The vast majority of the country, however, including the central islands of Java and Sumatra, almost unanimously supported the formation of an independent republic. Centuries of subjugation and the nationalists' successful campaign to propagate their vision during the Japanese occupation period and represent members from all major ethnic groups in the new parliament had been key to gaining overwhelmingly public support. Nationalist newspapers and journals were widespread and particularly well established in Jakarta, Yogyakarta and Surakarta.

London and Amsterdam dismissed the nationalist republican government as a Japanese creation and sought to reimpose their rule by force, for which the United States provided the Netherlands a $10 million loan.[8] U.S. forces in the region were preoccupied with the occupation of Japan and southern Korea, fighting the Chinese Civil War and suppressing the Philippines' own independence movement. France meanwhile was attempting to reoccupy its imperial territories in Southeast Asia, having lost them to the Japanese and, much like the Dutch, forced to contend with local nationalist forces which emerged in the aftermath.[9] Indonesia was thus placed under the jurisdiction of the British Admiral Earl Louis Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander of the South East Asia Command. The purpose of the British military intervention was explicitly to restore Dutch sovereignty over Indonesia and the pre-war Dutch colonial administration.[10] The Netherlands' own armed forces took months to restore even limited expeditionary capabilities, and Britain and Australia were to manage their former colony in the interim. The Western powers had thus split among themselves the task of re-imposing, or in the case of Japan and Korea newly imposing, their rule over East Asian peoples, suppressing independence movements, and restoring their regional dominance briefly lost to Japan's military campaigns.

British forces landed in Java and Sumatra in late September 1945, engaging Indonesian republican units within days, and left only 13 months later by which time the Dutch had deployed their own forces in sufficient

numbers to take over the war effort. The British government shared Washington's view that restoration of pre-war European empires was vital to ensuring the continent's economic recovery. Geopolitically this would not only strengthen the collective Western Bloc against challengers to its global dominance, but in the case of the Netherlands the British also had significant interests in its imperial projects including a 40 percent stake in Royal Dutch Shell which had a key interest in Indonesia. Other investments totalled £100 million.[11] As Western forces moved into Indonesia, Dutch administrators were quickly returned to enclaves of Western control in Kalimantan, Morotai and Irian Jaya. Australian and Dutch troops and administrators met the surrendering Japanese in several areas of eastern Indonesia. Britain delayed landing troops in Java, prioritizing freeing prisoners of war and repatriating around 300,000 Japanese personnel from the area.

Formed the bulk of British manpower in Asia, Indian personnel took the majority of the British Empire's casualties in the Indonesian colonial war and were deployed alongside Gurkha fighters from Nepal.[12] With the Japanese Empire obliged to ensure the transfer of Indonesian sovereignty back to European colonial authorities, Japanese forces deployed to Indonesia were pressed into seeing this through under British command, with use of surrendered Japanese units allowing the British to minimize their own casualties.[13] The Japanese were repatriated soon after driving Indonesian forces out of the West Javanese capital of Bandung, but not before many of their leadership were put on trial. 93 percent were condemned by European courts, of whom 24 percent were then executed.[14]

Hundreds of Japanese evaded repatriation, remained in Indonesia and assimilated into the republican forces, with many being influenced by pan-Asian ideals and supporting the cause of East Asian independence and self-determination. Japanese civilian Ichiki Tatsuo, who changed his name to Abdul Rahman, was one notable example and became a national hero in Indonesia. Deeply ashamed that Japan had failed to safeguard Indonesian sovereignty when the war ended, he surrendered his Japanese nationality to fight and die in Indonesia's war of independence.[15] Beyond these defections, however, it was acknowledged that British efforts to delegitimize

Indonesian resistance by framing it as a Japanese fascist plot suffered from a lack of any evidence of official Japanese support after Tokyo's surrender.[16]

British and Dutch forces did much to alienate the Indonesian population, with reports from British officers accusing their own forces of crude and unprofessional torture and other war crimes. Officers reportedly bragged of beating women to death, while other personnel tortured civilians for pleasure. First hand British sources strongly indicated that racial factors appeared to be a critical factor which motivated the mistreatment of civilians.[17] Sergeant Jackie Tertis, a member of the British Prevention of Enemy Activity force, recalled several incidents of torture and beatings to death of prisoners and civilians. Regarding his unit's treatment of a captured woman he recalled receiving the following report: "We questioned the girl all morning. She was guilty all right – confused in her answers. We stripped her off and tied her to the table with her legs open. Fought like a tiger, she did. We tore every strip of clothes off her and then raped her, all four of us, and then we mashed her tits [breasts] and head in with golf clubs."[18]

British forces relied on aircraft to gain a significant advantage over the republican forces and inflict heavy casualties, although after an attempt by Sukarno to arrange a ceasefire failed in early November fighting quickly escalated and saw the British pushed back to the coast. Ethnically European civilians and those suspected of pro-Western sympathies were frequently targeted by republican forces as the war drew out. From early 1946 Dutch forces played a growing role the war as the Netherlands rebuilt its armed forces, and in November that year Britain withdrew its last forces while the Netherlands by then deployed 55,000 personnel in Java alone. Amsterdam had prioritized rebuilding its fighting capacity at a time when the country was in the midst of post-war reconstruction, and reacquiring Indonesia's resource wealth was expected to be used to pay for the European state's recovery after the archipelago had for centuries been essential to holding up its living standards.

As Amsterdam diverted very considerable resources to the war effort, conflict with Indonesian republican forces drew out for over three years into 1949. Although Dutch forces managed a tenuous control of towns and cities in Java and Sumatra, Indonesia was still a primarily rural country and colonial forces struggled to control the villages and countryside. Republican

forces increasingly adopted guerrilla tactics, but also frequently captured major cities with many such as Yogyakarta changing hands several times. This made it difficult for colonial forces to consolidate their gains despite significant advantages in firepower.

The conduct of Dutch forces was if anything more brutal than that of the British, who were reportedly appalled by their allies' behaviour which included frequent massacres of civilians and looting and raiding of Indonesian houses. A British intelligence summary noted that Dutch troops would fire "indiscriminately and unnecessarily at inoffensive Indonesians. As an immediate consequence of such incidents, they have sometimes suffered themselves from the irritated population."[19] With between 45,000 and 100,000 Indonesians killed during the war, such conduct was largely responsible. Dutch commander Raymond Westerling was particularly known for his reign of terror, and prized public executions as a means of cowing the population.[20] Republican forces were themselves also known to execute prisoners of war in retribution.

Failing to secure a victory, Dutch forces increasingly took out their frustrations on the civilian population with severe war crimes. Analysts comparing Dutch actions to those of the Nazi German occupation in the Netherlands found that the Dutch were if anything far more brutal in their methods, although individuals publicizing the crimes committed even decades later faced persecution by the Dutch government. As observed in the British newspaper *The Independent*, the Dutch knowingly committed war crimes and extensively harassed those who raised the issue including banning its own citizens from entering the Netherlands. Concealing and downplaying this part of its history was key to maintaining the country's international image and soft power. The paper noted to this effect:

> *In the Netherlands there is a memory hole about this period, while volume after volume has been produced describing the horrors of life under the German occupation or the savagery of the Japanese forces in Dutch colonies in the Far East. The Dutch, quick to moralize about human rights abuses by other nations, have never properly examined or debated the unpleasant history of their own experience in the colonial war. Dutch society seems to suffer from collective amnesia when it comes to the murderous behaviour of the soldiers who tried unsuccessfully to suppress the Indonesian independence movement in the jungles of Java and other islands almost 50 years ago. Young conscript*

> *soldiers, acting under orders, put numerous hamlets to the torch and butchered men, women and children.*[21]

By 1949 a Dutch victory appeared increasingly impossible, and as Dutch Prime Minister Pieter Gerbrandy had predicted the Japanese Empire had destroyed the "racial instincts and inferiority complexes" that had been key to perpetuating the colonial order. By setting an example of Western defeat by East Asian hands, Japan had irreversibly changed local perceptions ensuring populations would not accept European subjugation.[22] Allied Western governments increasingly turned against the war effort, as at a time when the Soviet Union unprecedentedly challenged Western hegemony and sought to win the support of colonized peoples Dutch actions reinforced the image of Western powers as colonialists and oppressors.

As prospects for a swift reinstating of colonial rule faded the United States withdrew its support for the war and increasingly called on the Netherlands to end the conflict. With an amount equivalent to approximately half of America's $1 billion Marshall Plan aid package having been used to finance the colonial war, aid was reconsidered when Amsterdam failed to comply. Many in the Republican Party and other organizations increasingly opposed financing a losing struggle to reassert what was widely considered in Congress "a senile and ineffectual imperialism."[23] State Secretary Dean Acheson perhaps best summarized this by arguing that, in order to retain influence: "we must get ourselves on the side of nationalist movements, a task which is easier now that the dead hand of European colonialism has been removed."[24] As a result in 1949 the United Nations, then firmly under Washington's influence, called for the reinstatement of Indonesia's republican government.

While the U.S. portrayed itself as anti-imperialist, it only ended support for the Dutch war effort three years after it began, and as America had itself suppressed the Philippines' own anti-colonial movement. America would soon afterwards provide considerable backing to a very similar French colonial war in Indochina. Washington's opposition to Amsterdam's colonial war was thus not out of principle, but rather because it sought to position itself on the winning side and avoid alienating the new Indonesian government once Dutch defeat appeared certain.

The Netherlands agreed to peace talks in August 1949, although under its terms for ending the war it demanded Indonesia pay billions of dollars in war reparations. While no targets in the Netherlands were damaged, and much of Indonesia had been devastated by the war with tens of thousands killed by Dutch forces, not to mention the transfer of tremendous wealth to Europe by force and acts of genocide of preceding centuries, it was still Indonesia which was arbitrarily burdened with debt. This was a price the republican government was willing to pay to end the war, and sovereignty was formally transferred on December 27, 1949, over four years after independence had been declared. Under the Western-dominated international system Amsterdam had to consent for this to be considered a formal independence and be recognized.

At the war's conclusion Sukarno recalled: "Millions upon millions flooded the sidewalks, the roads. They were crying, cheering, screaming 'Long live Bung Karno.' They clung to the sides of the car, the hood, the running boards. They grabbed at me to kiss my fingers. Soldiers beat a path for me to the topmost step of the big white palace. There I raised both hands high. A stillness swept over the millions. 'Alhamdulillah – Thank God,' I cried. 'We are free.'"[25] It was only due to the unrelenting zeal for confronting the Western imperial powers and demonstrations of force, particularly among nationalist youth groups, that republican forces had been in a position to press for independence in negotiations. Had the Indonesian population not shown willingness to resist a European invasion through armed struggle, reinstatement of Dutch imperial rule would have been likely. As a result Indonesia achieved self-rule for the first time in centuries.

Holding Sukarno's Feet to the Fire: The CIA's War Against Indonesia

As the Cold War escalated in the early 1950s and the United States increasingly expected support from the third world against the Soviet Union, Indonesia's new nationalist government under Sukarno's presidency soon

fell out of favour with Washington for its neutrality. As award-winning *New York Times* reporter and expert of the history of the CIA, Tim Weiner, reported on Indonesia: "The nation came into the CIA's focus after the Korean War [1953], when the agency realized that Indonesia had perhaps twenty billion barrels of untapped oil, a leader unwilling to align himself with the United States, and a rising communist movement." Regarding the positions of CIA Director Allen Dulles and his brother State Secretary John Foster Dulles, who pressed for a particularly hard line, Weiner noted: "Sukarno had declared himself a non-combatant in the cold war, and there were no neutrals in their eyes."[26] As early as September 1953, director of the Mutual Security Agency Harold Stassen told Vice President Nixon and the Dulles brothers that they "might well give thought to measures by this Government that would cause the fall of the new regime in Indonesia," with its position of Cold War non alignment in particular seen as unacceptable.[27]

Indonesia was one of five founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement, a stated goal of which was to "struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, and all forms of foreign aggression, occupation, domination, interference or hegemony as well as against great power and bloc politics."[28] As the movement's most influential leader Sukarno hosted the Bandung Conference in 1955 which drew together non-aligned leaders from across Asia and Africa as well as Yugoslavia and laid out the principles on which the movement would be based. The movement gained considerable influence and aimed to assert members' rights to independence from both the Western Bloc and the Soviet Union.

The formation of the Non-Aligned Movement threatened Western imperial designs far more than it did to those of the USSR, with the former having significantly less tolerance for neutrality in the Cold War and expecting third world support against Moscow. Non-aligned leaders consistently came to have better relations with the Soviet Union largely because of consistent Western efforts to overthrow and undermine them, in contrast to Moscow which did not seek to topple neutral governments. Of the Non-Aligned Movement's five founding members Indonesia, Yugoslavia, India, Egypt and Ghana, all came under attack by the Western Bloc. This came either through extensive support for coups by the CIA (Ghana,[29] Indonesia),

by direct Western military assaults (Yugoslavia, Egypt, Indonesia), or by assassination attempts against their leaders (India in 1955, Indonesia in the 1950s and 1962, Egypt in 1957).[30] The Soviet Union by contrast had no colonialist history and engaged in far fewer military interventions overseas during the course of the Cold War, and as a result Moscow were not perceived as a threat by the majority of non-aligned states and went on to form close relations with most of them. The only exception was Yugoslavia which did in the 1940s fear an attack by the USSR – although this never occurred and it was in fact the Western Bloc rather than the Soviet Bloc which would go on to attack and dismember the state in the 1990s.[31]

The new Indonesian republic's relations with the United States notably deteriorated after Jakarta purchased arms from communist Warsaw Pact countries, despite having only done so after being turned down by the U.S. itself beforehand. The nationalization of private holdings of Dutch colonialists further coloured Sukarno's image red in American eyes, although this represented a nationalist-motivated attempt to reverse the acquisitions made under colonial rule rather than a communist effort to bring private property under state control. Washington and its intelligence agencies, expecting the world to unite against the USSR, consistently refused to distinguish nationalism and neutrality from pro-communism. Sukarno had visited the White House, the Kremlin and communist China, but far more attention was paid to latter two visits as proof that he was a communist sympathizer. A genuinely independent foreign policy such as that of Indonesia fell outside the scope of predominant U.S. paradigms for viewing the world, under which every country was either a communist puppet or an ally of the West against Moscow. This closely mirrored the "if you're not with us, you are against us" foreign relations outlook announced by President George W. Bush in 2002, with those failing to oppose the USSR consistently being perceived as adversaries by Washington.

State Secretary Dulles stated regarding American perceptions of and resulting policy towards those newly independent countries which did not firmly align themselves with the West: "Neutrality... has increasingly become an obsolete conception, and, except under very exceptional circumstances, it is an immoral and short-sighted conception."[32] President Sukarno referred to Western opposition to genuine neutrality as follows: "To me, both the

[American] Declaration of Independence and the Communist Manifesto contain underlying truths, but the West doesn't permit a middle road."[33] "At least Russia and China didn't call us names when we smiled sweetly at America," he added, with the Indonesian leader repeatedly stressing the discrepancy between Western intolerance for neutrality and the more respectful stances of Moscow and Beijing.[34]

Indonesia's domestic political developments only strengthened American hostility, in particular when the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) made significant electoral gains and succeeded in unionizing much of the workforce. Although they had not played a major role in the independence war, the PKI emerged as key players in Indonesian politics and in the republic's coalition government. Sukarno nevertheless held power, and far from a communist himself he had led republican forces to swiftly crush communist factions which had sought to take over by force after the country's independence. As to excluding the PKI from government as U.S. clients such as the Philippines and South Korea had, Sukarno had said: "I can't and won't ride a three-legged horse."[35] Sukarno appeared the more genuine democrat in this regard as communists and other potentially undesirable but popular political groups were allowed to participate in elections, and as a result the PKI gained over 1 million members by the mid-1950s.

Consistent with U.S. policy across the non-Western world, plans were set in motion to undermine the Indonesian state and ensure both greater Western influence on domestic issues and a realignment of the country's foreign policy away from neutrality. In the autumn of 1956, CIA Deputy Director of Plans Frank Wisner said: "I think it's time we held Sukarno's feet to the fire."[36] In 1975 a Senate committee investigating the CIA reported that it had "received some evidence of CIA involvement in plans to assassinate President Sukarno of Indonesia," which had proceeded to the point of identifying an agent to be recruited for the job.[37] The committee separately heard testimony that CIA officers had advocated the assassination of a certain East Asian leader "to disrupt an impending Communist Conference in 1955."[38] While the Non-Aligned Movement which held the Bandung Conference that year was far from communist, the 'communist' label was widely applied to justify actions against almost any state, organization or

individual opposing Western interests. Examples were numerous of nationalist governments outside the Western sphere of influence targeted by the CIA under the pretext that they were at risk of coming under communist influence, but showing few actual signs of possible communist takeover, ranging from Syria[39] and Iran[40] to Congo[41] and Guatemala.[42]

In 1955 before Indonesia's first parliamentary elections the CIA had given one million dollars to the Islamist Masjumi Party to aid their campaign and thwart Sukarno's nationalists and the PKI. Their finances were highly dubious, however, and former CIA officer Joseph Burkholder Smith said that the project "provided for complete write-off of the funds, that is, no demand for a detailed accounting of how the funds were spent was required. I could find no clue as to what the Masjumi did with the million dollars." The Islamists performed poorly in the elections and the investment failed to yield results.[43]

Two years later in 1957 the CIA decided on more forceful intervention, and made contact with Indonesian military officers and others who wanted either to oust Sukarno's government or to expel its authority from their regions. The CIA sought to use these figures to support a military intervention that would install a more compliant regime, and failing this to fragment the new Indonesian state and thereby weaken its ability to oppose Western interests. To conduct an operation on this scale the agency needed to gain the Pentagon's support through the National Security Council's Special Group. The Special Group – at other times called the 5412 Committee, the 303 Committee, the 40 Committee or the Operations Advisory Group – was a small group of Security Council officials who acted in the name of the president and were tasked with evaluating proposed covert actions and monitoring CIA operations.

Joseph Burkholder Smith, in charge of the CIA's Indonesian desk from 1956 to 1958, described the steps the CIA took to gain approval for intervention. He highlighted that instead of proposing the plan to Washington for approval first, as there was the risk that "premature mention... might get it shot down," the CIA adopted a different strategy:

> *We began to feed the State and Defence departments intelligence that no one could deny was a useful contribution to understanding Indonesia. When they had read enough alarming reports, we planned to spring the suggestion we should support the colonels'*

> *plans to reduce Sukarno's power. This was a method of operation which became the basis of many of the political action adventures of the 1960s and 1970s. In other words, the statement is false that the CIA undertook to intervene in the affairs of countries like Chile only after being ordered to do so by... the Special Group... In many instances, we made the action programs up ourselves after we had collected enough intelligence to make them appear required by the circumstances. Our activity in Indonesia in 1957–1958 was one such instance.*[44]

The PKI's strong performance in Indonesian elections in July was viewed by the CIA as "a great help to us in convincing the Washington authorities how serious the Indonesian situation was. The only person who did not seem terribly alarmed at PKI victories was ambassador Allison. This was all we needed to convince [State Secretary] John Foster Dulles finally that he had the wrong man in Indonesia. The wheels began to turn to remove this last stumbling block in the way of our operation."[45] According to Smith, U.S. ambassador to Indonesia John Allison did not approve of the CIA's actions. In early 1958, after less than a year in the post, he was replaced by Howard Jones which "pleased" the CIA Indonesia staff.[46]

The events in Indonesia essentially demonstrated how the CIA, through manipulating intelligence it gave Washington, could effectively direct American foreign policy to a large extent. As CIA case officer Ralph McGehee among many others observed, the agency acted far beyond its intelligence gathering role and would manipulate its intelligence reports to gain support for its foreign policy goals. He stated:

> *The CIA is not now nor has it ever been a Central Intelligence Agency. It is the covert action arm of the president's foreign policy advisers. In that capacity it overthrows or supports foreign governments while reporting 'intelligence' justifying those activities. It shapes its intelligence, even in such critical areas as Soviet nuclear weapons capability, to support presidential policy. Disinformation is a large part of its covert action responsibility, and the American people are the primary target audience of its lies.*[47]

U.S. foreign policy objectives consistently aimed not only to contain communism but also to undermine governments outside the Western sphere of influence which did not firmly align themselves with Western interests whether they were pro-Soviet or neutral. The CIA thus continued to work against the Indonesian state as a whole rather than target

the communist minority party directly, with the PKI's participation in elections being a useful pretext for action against the Indonesian state but hardly the reason for Indonesia to be targeted.

The CIA helped spread reports of Jakarta's close relationship with communist states, creating a story of a seductive blonde-haired Soviet stewardess accompanying Sukarno everywhere he went during his trip to the USSR. The reports stated that this same woman had come to Indonesia during Soviet Presidium Chairman Kliment Voroshilov's visit to Indonesia and was seen with Sukarno several times. Sukarno himself was a known womanizer, and the CIA propagated the story that he had been seduced by a Soviet agent who had placed him under Moscow's control. These kinds of fantastic stories about the 'international communist conspiracy' were far from uncommon and were widely believed in the United States at the time. CIA case officer Smith wrote in his memoirs: "This formed the foundation of our flights of fancy... We had as a matter of fact considerable success with this theme. It appeared in the press around the world, and when *Round Table*, the serious British quarterly of international affairs, came to analyse the Indonesian revolt in its March 1958 issue, it listed Sukarno's being blackmailed by a Soviet female spy as one of the reasons that caused the uprising."[48]

This success of the disinformation campaign led the CIA to seek to fabricate a pornographic film or pornographic photos of Sukarno and his imagined Soviet girlfriend. Available pornographic films failed to come up with a pair who could pass for them, and the CIA resorted to producing its own to act as "the very films with which the Soviets were blackmailing Sukarno." A full-face mask of Sukarno was made, and pornography actors were to be paid to stage out the scene with one wearing the mask. This resulted in the production of at least some photographs, although this stage of the plan was not implemented and they were never used.[49]

In the 1960 edition of *Reader's Digest*, retired U.S. Army Colonel Truman Smith wrote on Soviet intelligence: "It is difficult for most of us to appreciate its menace, as its methods are so debased as to be all but beyond the comprehension of any normal person with a sense of right and wrong." He wrote of the Soviets' alleged production of sex films to be used as blackmail: "People depraved enough to employ such methods... find

nothing distasteful in more violent methods."[50] This proved to be highly ironic because of the extensive evidence showing the CIA doing precisely what the Soviets were without evidence being accused of.

In November 1957 the Special Group approved CIA military action against Indonesia.[51] President Eisenhower also gave orders for the CIA to overthrow the Indonesian government by arming and unifying anti-government actors, according to the agency's own records.[52] The CIA used the U.S. Military's vast network of bases, and assembled an army of Indonesian dissidents and mercenaries of Chinese, Filipino and American descent among others in Okinawa and the Philippines with considerable material support. Headquarters were established in British-occupied Singapore with London's permission. Training bases were set up in the Philippines, and airstrips were prepared across the Pacific both to transport the CIA's new army and for use by the jet bombers that flew under the CIA paramilitary wing to engage Indonesian targets.

This was one of the CIA's largest ever military operations, eclipsing even the arming of proxy armies to target China in the 1950s, with tens of thousands of militiamen equipped and trained. The U.S. Navy's submarines were used to deploy combatants on the Sumatran coast with their supplies and equipment, and the U.S. Air Force was enlisted to airdrop thousands of weapons deep into Indonesian territory. Fifteen B-26 Marauder bombers were made available for the operation, although they had to be 'sanitized' to ensure that their origin could not be proved if they fell into enemy hands. This was effectively a war against the newly independent Indonesian republic, albeit one waged in a way that Washington could deny its involvement.

Conflict spread throughout Indonesia in 1958, with CIA pilots from Pacific bases bombing and strafing government forces to support militias on the ground. A CIA-financed radio station was established to serve as the voice of anti-government forces, and was used to convey demands for a new government and the outlawing of communism.[53] Colonel Alex Kawilarang, the Indonesian military attaché in Washington, was persuaded to defect and was soon helping to co-ordinate the campaign. CIA bombers exacted a heavy toll on Indonesian forces and caused massive casualties when targeting civilians. Sukarno would later claim that on an April Sunday

morning in 1958 a CIA plane, in a single bombing run, bombed a ship in the harbour of Ambon killing all those aboard as well as hitting a church and killing all those inside. He alleged that this one bombing run killed 700 civilians – a claim which was later supported by American sources.[54]

On May 15, 1958, the CIA's air units bombed Ambon marketplace killing dozens of civilians on their way to Church on Ascension Thursday, leading to a significant public backlash and large demonstrations.[55] Three days later in another CIA bombing run over Ambon pilot Allen Lawrence Pope was shot down and captured.[ii] He had flown for the CIA dozens of times in the Korean War and supported the French colonial war in Vietnam. Pope carried a set of incriminating documents which established him as a U.S. Air Force pilot flying under a CIA airline. He had apparently smuggled papers onboard for fear for his own safety – because to have been captured as an unknown stateless civilian bomber would have granted him few rights. A captured U.S. agent, however, he could be valuable to his captors. Pope's identification upon capture, much to the chagrin of the CIA, proved their deep and direct involvement in the war.[56]

On May 27 Pope and his documents were presented to the world at a news conference, contradicting several statements by American officials that the U.S. had not been involved in the war against Indonesia. President Eisenhower had notably said on April 30 regarding Indonesia: "Our policy is one of careful neutrality and proper deportment all the way through so

ii Pope had bombed civilian targets across Ambon, and had been about to kill hundreds more on a ship before being shot down. He recalled decades later regarding his view on the operations: "I enjoyed killing Communists. I liked to kill Communists any way I could get them." Regarding the operations' value he stated: "They *said* Indonesia was a failure. But we knocked the shit out of them. We killed thousands of Communists, even though half of them probably didn't even know what Communism meant." These highly prevalent attitudes would strongly influence the conduct of Western forces in theatres across East Asia, often against civilians of actual communist countries but also, as in Indonesia's case, against those of a non-communist state. If Indonesian civilians in Ambon were 'communists,' then those of any East Asian country outside Western control could be labelled as such to justify their slaughter. (Weiner, Tim, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA*, New York, Anchor Books, 2008 (Chapter 15: A Very Strange War).)

as not to be taking sides where it is none of our business."[57] On May 9 the *New York Times* editorial had similarly stated:

> *It is unfortunate that high officials of the Indonesian Government have given further circulation to the false report that the United States Government was sanctioning aid to Indonesia's rebels. The position of the United States Government has been made plain, again and again. Our Secretary of State was emphatic in his declaration that this country would not deviate from a correct neutrality... the United States is not ready... to step in to help overthrow a constituted government. Those are the hard facts. Jakarta does not help its case, here, by ignoring them.* [58]

Indonesian claims proved to be entirely correct and those of the U.S. outright lies. Pope spent four years as a prisoner before Sukarno accepted Attorney General Robert Kennedy's request to release him in exchange for American concessions.

The war ended in June 1958, with the CIA's militias decisively defeated while the agency itself suffered considerable international embarrassment after its responsibility for both masterminding the unprovoked war effort and perpetrating the mass killings of civilians were revealed. Despite the formidable firepower deployed and the support of an extensive U.S. and British military apparatus including cutting edge air and naval capabilities, the CIA could not influence the tide of battle sufficiently in favour of its proxies. The failure of its forces to win victories or launch successful offensives, and the exposure of one of its pilots, forced the CIA to cut its losses and concede defeat. Leftover military supplies and aircraft from the operation were sent to Taiwan, Thailand, the Philippines, Laos and Okinawa and used for future CIA operations, with the agency supporting militias across the region to go where the U.S. Military could not.[59]

Many Indonesians had lost their lives, and the newly formed republic had been forced to commit significant resources and attentions to fighting and away from economic development. The war against Indonesia was unnecessary in the context of the Cold War and containing communism – but it was essential to the Western Bloc's agenda of dominating the East Asian region and the wider world and suppressing those states that remained outside its sphere of influence. Although Indonesia had triumphed, the U.S. and CIA had lost little themselves. Casualties were overwhelmingly

Indonesian dissidents or mercenaries, while the CIA had sustained negligible personnel or material losses itself while having seriously threatened Indonesian stability. The failure of the proxy war to gain any tangible results hardly meant an end to CIA actions against Indonesia, and the country would see other means brought to bear to subjugate it to Western power.

After the war's end Indonesia's relations with the West only deteriorated further, with Jakarta remaining a leading member of the Non-Aligned Movement and allowing the PKI to continue to act as part of a ruling coalition by popular vote. In response to Western hostility Jakarta aligned its foreign policy more closely with China and the USSR, the latter which began to furnish it with more capable air defences, fighters and bombers which would make any future Western attacks far more difficult.[60] Sukarno personally took more power over the state, and in March 1960 changed the parliamentary structure so that he as president would appoint half of its members. Several Islamist elements which the United States had aided, either in political campaigns or armed rebellion, faced crackdowns.

Western imperial powers had long aided radical Islamist groups to destabilize countries outside their spheres of influence, and the U.S. alliance with the Islamists in Indonesia in the 1950s proved invaluable in furthering Western designs in the country. Similar relations were formed with Islamist groups in Egypt, another leading Non-Aligned Movement member, to similarly benefit Western interests and work against the government there, and in Syria where they were called upon to carry out assassinations of officials designated by the CIA and Britain's MI6.[61] Islamist groups, like the U.S., opposed the secular Indonesian government and their tolerance of the 'godless' communist PKI. Several Islamist leaders had been invited to the United States by a program run covertly by the U.S. Information Agency in 1953, under which relations were cemented and communist, secular nationalist and other such 'atheistic' governments outside the Western sphere of influence were portrayed as the common enemy of both the West and of political Islam.[62] This facilitated strong and lasting partnerships that did much to further undermine challengers to Western hegemony in the third world. In the early 1960s there were multiple attempts on President Sukarno's life by Islamist groups, including an attempt by Islamist sympathizing Indonesian Air Force lieutenant Daniel

Maukar, to kill the president by strafing the Bogor presidential palace in a MiG-17 fighter on March 9, 1960. Sukarno escaped these attempts on his life unharmed. Islamist rebel forces faced several defeats at the hands of the military, and the leader of Darul Islam, the most prominent Islamist group, was captured and executed in 1962.

Britain, Australia and New Zealand also went to considerable lengths to contribute to pursing the common Western interest of destabilizing Indonesia. Provision of arms and funding to separatist groups, radio broadcasts advocating autonomy or independence for certain regions, and conducting a psychological warfare campaign intended to "aid and encourage dissident movements inside Indonesia" were intended to undermine its viability as a unified state.[63] U.S. and allied actions made their positions clear and forcibly pushed Indonesia away from neutrality, as part of a wider global trend towards newly independent non-aligned countries facing Western aggression consistently moving to align with the USSR or China to better ensure their security. As a result by the early 1960s the USSR was providing more aid to Indonesia than it did any other non-communist country, which was equalled only by its aid to Cuba.

Indonesia became an increasingly influential player on the international stage, and led calls to form an alliance of East Asian states independent of the Western Bloc which formed in 1964 as the Beijing-Pyongyang-Hanoi-Phnom Penh-Jakarta Axis. The country was a leading supporter of several initiatives to create alternative bodies to those seen to be dominated by the West, including the Conference of the New Emerging Forces (CONEFO) as an alternative to the Western dominated United Nations. The Games of New Emerging Forces (GANEFO) were also created as an alternative to the allegedly imperialist and excessively Western dominated Olympic Games.

Domestically Sukarno's administration continued to balance power between the PKI and the military, but falsely branding Sukarno a communist was to some degree a self-fulfilling prophecy as it was the hostile actions taken under the pretext of his non-existent communist leanings which led his government to strengthen ties to communist powers for security. As Sukarno moved closer to China and the USSR abroad and the PKI expanded its support base domestically, Western sources consistently claimed there was an imminent threat that communists would take power

in Indonesia. While this remained far from likely, it provided a valuable pretext to accelerate efforts to overthrow the Indonesian government and lent greater legitimacy to such efforts in the Western world where anti-communist sentiments were high.

Mass Slaughter and the Restoration of Western Influence over Indonesia

In the early hours of October 1, 1965, a small force of junior military officers seized key strategic points in the Indonesian capital Jakarta. They abducted and killed six generals and announced on radio that they had acted to forestall a CIA-backed coup by a 'Generals' Council' against President Sukarno scheduled for October 5.[64] The military subsequently intervened and crushed the junior officers' movement across several cities within a few days, with control of Jakarta regained within hours.

Commander of the 1st Armed Force and Strategic Reserve Major General Suharto (like Sukarno, Suharto and many other Javanese had just one name) along with his colleagues charged that the junior officers were themselves involved in a coup attempt backed by the communist PKI. Quickly seizing control of all major media outlets, they claimed that a Chinese conspiracy was responsible using the PKI as its proxies. There had long been antagonism between the military and the communists, and the former now took to the offensive to eliminate the latter using the young officers' actions as a pretext. Intensive atrocity propaganda vilifying the PKI began to be propagated from October 3,[65] working much of the public into a frenzy of fear, and offensives to eliminate party members and their families and sympathizers received strong support from Islamist and Catholic groups both of which maintained strong ties to the Western powers. The result was a mass slaughter on a scale with few equals in modern history as associates of the PKI and other leftist groups and their families were exterminated – described by scholars as "the murder lynching, raping and torturing of the communists."[66] Estimates of the number of Indonesian

civilians killed in the military's purge range from 500,000 to over 3 million.[67] The *New York Times* called the resulting carnage led by the military "one of the most savage mass slaughters of modern political history."[68]

Islamist groups in particular were encouraged to participate in the killings, spurred by warnings from religious leaders of the evils of 'atheistic' communist menace, with Imams instructing their followers that it was a religious obligation to kill suspected PKI sympathizers. PKI members and their associates were said to be the lowest order of infidels, "the shedding of whose blood is comparable to killing chicken."[69] The badly decomposed bodies of the generals who had been killed by the young officers were shown on television, and although the junior officers' coup had no known ties to communism or the PKI their deaths were presented as the result of a communist conspiracy. The public was informed that the generals had been castrated and had their eyes gouged out by women from PKI-aligned socialist women's rights groups, although the military later made the mistake of allowing official medical autopsies to be included as evidence in some trials. The extremely detailed reports mentioned only bullet wounds and bruising – no eye gouging or castration on any of the generals' bodies.[70]

Time magazine wrote in December 1965: "Armed with wide-bladed knives called *parangs*, Moslem [Muslim] bands crept at night into the homes of the communists, killing entire families... Travelers... tell of small rivers and streams that have been literally clogged with bodies. River transportation has at places been seriously impeded."[71] *Life* magazine described the violence as being "tinged not only with fanaticism but with bloodlust and something like witchcraft."[72] The *New York Times* wrote in May 1966: "Nearly 100 communists, or suspected Communists, were herded into the town's botanical garden and mowed down with a machine gun... the head that had belonged to the school principal, a P.K.I. member, was stuck on a pole and paraded among his former pupils, convened in special assembly."[73] CIA officer Edward Masters sent a cable from the U.S. Embassy in 1966 noting the 'problem' the authorities faced in dealing with communist prisoners. He stated: "Both in the provinces and Djakarta [Jakarta], repression of the PKI continued, with the main problem that of what to feed and where to house the prisoners. Many provinces appear to be successfully meeting this problem by executing their prisoners, or killing

them before they are captured, a task in which Muslim youth groups are providing assistance."[74] For those that remained imprisoned, mass starvation and widespread resulting deaths were common, while poor sanitary conditions and provision of rotting food rations fuelled the spread of disease.[75]

While Western involvement in the slaughter had long been suspected, with a purge of the PKI, the ousting of Sukarno, and the subsequent realignment of Indonesian foreign policy all having been key Western policy goals, this was proven only twenty-five years later. Declassified U.S. government documents revealed that American black operations in Indonesia throughout the early 1960s had played a key role in laying the ground for the later massacre. These operations had been initiated with the explicit intention of exacerbating tensions between the military and the PKI, and if possible causing a direct conflict between the two to facilitate a forceful move against Indonesia's communists – exactly the result achieved in 1965.[76] U.S. officials had met with figures in the Indonesian military leadership, and noted "receptiveness" within the high command for a coup which would enjoy full American support. General Siswondo Parman, the head of Indonesia's military intelligence who had previously studied in the United States, had reported in January 1965 that there was a "strong sentiment" within the "top military command" for a "takeover of government" – for which specific plans were being developed.[77]

It was repeatedly alluded to that engineering a PKI coup could provide precisely the pretext the military needed to carry out its own coup – replacing Sukarno's government and eliminating the communist movement it protected. A CIA strategy outlined in a U.S.-Indonesian relations memorandum in September 1964 highlighted that the military would be more capable of acting forcefully if it were responding to a perceived PKI provocation. It read: "An abrupt or aggressive move on the latter's [PKI's] part would surely evoke Amy reaction."[78] Ambassador Howard Jones concurred, stating at a closed meeting of State Department officials in March 1965: "From our viewpoint, of course, an unsuccessful coup attempt by the PKI might be the most effective development to start a reversal of political trends in Indonesia."[79] The assistant secretary of state in the British Foreign Office Edward Peck similarly noted in a memorandum from late November 1964: "There might therefore be much to be said for

encouraging a premature PKI coup during Sukarno's lifetime."[80] Another British official commented the following month: "A premature PKI coup may be the most helpful solution for the West – provided the coup failed."[81] New Zealand's legation to Jakarta came to much the same conclusion regarding the benefit to Western interests of a failed premature PKI coup.[82]

American Professor Geoffrey B. Robinson concluded in his extensive study of the 1965 massacres: "We have here clear evidence that in the year before the purported coup of October 1965, U.S. officials were seriously contemplating – and indeed starting to implement – strategies designed to encourage the army and its civilian allies [Islamist groups in particular] to act against the PKI, without leaving U.S. or other foreign fingerprints."[83] Encouragement from the West was forthcoming, a notable example being the influential Professor Guy Pauker, who had close ties with the U.S. Military and extensive contacts with the Indonesian Military. He pressed the latter to "fulfil a mission" and "strike to sweep their house clean," stressing the need to emulate "the ruthlessness that made it possible for the Nazis to suppress the Communist Party of Germany."[84] The United States continued to be involved long after the killings had started, and American diplomats disclosed that they had systematically compiled comprehensive lists of suspected communists from top echelons down to village cadres and turned over thousands of names to the Indonesian Military for elimination. Americans would then check off the names as they were killed. Marshall Green, who was appointed U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia during the purge, said: "I know we had a lot more information [about the PKI] than the Indonesians themselves." He said that Robert Martens, who had been a member of the embassy's political section in Jakarta, "told me on a number of occasions that... the government did not have very good information on the communist setup, and he gave me the impression that this information was superior to anything they had." Intelligence long gathered through American-friendly police officers and army members trained in the United States under U.S. aid programs began to be actively put to use.[85]

Britain was also heavily involved in supporting efforts against the PKI, with the political advisor to the commander-in-chief in Singapore advising the Foreign Office on October 5: "We should not miss the present opportunities to use the situation to our advantage... We should have no hesitation

in doing what we can surreptitiously to blacken the PKI in the eyes of the army and the people of Indonesia." The Foreign Office quickly agreed, and subsequently on October 8 informed command in Singapore: "Our objectives are to encourage anti-Communist Indonesians to more vigorous action in the hope of crushing Communism in Indonesia altogether, even if only temporarily, and, to this end and for its own sake, to spread alarm and despondency in Indonesia to prevent, or at any rate delay, re-emergence of Nasakom Government [government including PKI] under Sukarno."[86]

British Foreign Office documents declassified in 2021 showed that, despite consistently denying involvement, British intelligence played a key role in shaping public opinion and inciting killings through influential media assets. A British government-funded newsletter produced in neighbouring Singapore, for example, called for "the PKI and all communist organisations" to "be eliminated," claiming that Indonesia will remain in peril "as long as the communist leaders are at large and their rank and file are allowed to go unpunished." "Procrastination and half-hearted measures can only lead to... our ultimate and complete destruction," it warned. "We demand in the name of all patriotic people that this communist cancer be cut out of the body of the state," other broadcasts urged, stressing that the PKI "is now a wounded snake. Now is the time to kill it before it has a chance to recover." "Communism must be abolished in all its forms. The work started by the army must be carried on and intensified," another publication stated, while another called for "a vigorous campaign to eradicate communism." "We are fighting for our lives and the very existence of Indonesia and we must never forget that. THE CATS ARE WAITING TO POUNCE!," another warned, while another stressed "The PKI and all it stands for must be eliminated for all time." These publications spreading fear and inciting attacks claimed to be the voice of Indonesian nationalists, with their origins as a foreign intelligence agency operation well concealed. Newsletters particularly targeted influential figures in the government, military and civil service.[87]

British propagandists compared the PKI to Adolf Hitler and Genghis Khan, praising the military for "doing an excellent job" in targeting the PKI. Norman Reddaway, a leading propagandist working in Singapore, wrote to the British ambassador in Jakarta that the new military government was

expected to govern more in line with Western interests, and as such as it was necessary "to conceal the fact that the butcheries have taken place with the encouragement of the generals." The Foreign Office and Indonesian generals were "singing in harmony," he added, highlighting that investments in propaganda had successfully topped the Indonesian government at "minimal cost" to London. These efforts were aided by Britain's extensive signals intelligence assets in Singapore which could provide up to date intelligence on events within Indonesia that would "help the generals to persecute the PKI more effectively," according to Reddaway.[88]

Mary Vance Trent, the U.S. Embassy's First Secretary, reported the elimination of the PKI and mass killings of civilians to Washington as a "fantastic switch which has occurred over 10 short weeks."[89] Robert Martens said in 1990 regarding the information the embassy had provided: "It really was a big help to the army. They probably killed a lot of people, and I probably have a lot of blood on my hands, but that's not all bad. There's a time when you have to strike hard at a decisive moment."[90] Howard Federspiel, an Indonesia expert at the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research at the time of the incident, stated to similar effect: "No one cared, as long as they were Communists, that they were being butchered... No one was getting very worked up about it."[91] This fit into a much broader trend where the mass killing of East Asian civilians was considered a price worth paying to strengthen Western dominance of the region. Had they been communists in a Western country, however, such comments could not have been so easily made. "No one cared... that they were being butchered" primarily because the deaths of East Asian peoples were far more easily dismissed.

Martens viewed the fall of the Indonesian government as a crucial step towards the collapse of the international communist movement, including the eventual fall of the USSR and Warsaw Pact. "Indonesia was a major step in destroying the myth of communist momentum, the image of its supposed inevitable triumph," he concluded.[92] The importance of destroying the world's largest communist opposition party was emphasized as a pivotal moment in the Cold War in his later publication titled: *The Indonesian Turning Point*. While the claim that Indonesia was set become a communist state was highly questionable, the successful toppling of its nationalist and

highly influential anti-imperialist government was arguably far more meaningful to Western efforts to dominate East Asia than the loss of a small, war-ravaged and resource-scarce South Vietnam ten years later. Indeed, as early as 1965 a senior CIA officer had highlighted regarding Indonesia's importance: "The loss of a nation of 105 million to the 'Communist camp' would make a victory in Vietnam of little meaning."[93]

Rape and torture were common during the purge, with members of PKI-affiliated women's organizations having their genitals torn by bottles and facing frequent rapes before being killed or imprisoned.[94] Indonesia's large Chinese community were singled out for targeting, and mass killings and sexual abuse against women and children were widespread in the frenzy that followed. Methods of torture included forcing victims to drink urine, cutting off their ears and forcing them to consume them, burning body parts, electric shocks and pulling out fingernails.[95] Those considered not to support Suharto's new government with sufficient fervour were also targeted.[96] Targets thus included Indonesia's largest civilian political groups, its minorities which had been key to its economic success, and anyone the new Western-backed military-run government perceived as a potential threat to its power.

In 2016 an international tribunal in The Hague released a verdict which shed new light on the massacres of 1965 finding Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States complicit. The associated report stated: "It has also been demonstrated that sexual violence, particularly against women, was systematic and routine, especially during the period 1965 to 1967." The tribunal accused the three Western powers of using their considerable influence over information to manipulate public opinion globally in favour of the perpetrators of the massacre and the new Indonesian Military government they supported. Australia and Britain were said to have participated because they "shared the U.S. aim of seeking to bring about the overthrow of President Sukarno. They continued with this policy even after it had become abundantly clear that killings were taking place on a mass and indiscriminate basis. On balance, this appears to justify the charge of complicity."[97] Indonesian Navy personnel notably recalled secretly receiving training in Australia to prepare them for the mass killings of 1965, although this was not proven.[98]

Longstanding American efforts to build closer links with the Indonesian Military were key to facilitating its support for their operations against the government and PKI. Roger Hilsman, who worked in both the CIA and the State Department, wrote in 1963: "One third of Indonesian general staff had had some sort of training from Americans and almost half of the officer corps. As a result of both the civic action project and the training program, the American and Indonesian militaries had come to know each other well. Bonds of personal respect and even affection existed."[99] Reports by the United States' House Committee on Foreign Affairs stated that at the time of the 1965 killings,

> *more than 1,200 Indonesian officers including senior military figures, had been trained in the United States. As a result of this experience, numerous friendships and contacts existed between the Indonesian and American military establishments, particularly between members of the two armies. In the post-coup period, when the political situation was still unsettled, the United States, using these existing channels of communication, was able to provide the anti-Communist forces with moral and token material support. When the average MAP (Military Assistance Program) trainee returns home he may well have some American acquaintances and a fair appreciation of the United States. This impact may provide some valuable future opportunity for communication as occurred in Indonesia during and immediately after the attempted Communist-backed coup of October 1965.*[100]

The *New York Times* wrote that the CIA had "been so successful at infiltrating the top of the Indonesian government and army that the United States was reluctant to disrupt CIA covering operations by withdrawing aid and information programs in 1964 and 1965. What was presented officially in Washington as toleration of President Sukarno's insults and provocations was in much larger measure a desire to keep the CIA fronts in business as long as possible."[101] Aid was an essential means by which the CIA could infiltrate the government to further U.S. interests and pave the ground for its overthrow, and therefore continued despite Indonesia's poor relations with Washington. Defence Secretary Robert McNamara gave testimony before the Senate Committee in 1966 further indicating that U.S. aid to Indonesia yielded results, implying a connection to the change in government that just occurred:

Senator Sparkman: At a time when Indonesia was kicking up pretty badly – when we were getting a lot of criticism for continuing military aid – at that time we could not say what the military aid was for. It is a secret any more?

McNamara: I think it retrospect, that the aid was well justified.

Sparkman: You think it paid dividends?

McNamara: I do, sir.[102]

The *New York Times* wrote in 1966 regarding the events in Indonesia: "There was a great deal more contact between the anti-Communist forces in that country and at least one very high official in Washington before and during the Indonesian massacre than is generally realized. General Suharto's forces, at times severely short of food and munitions, have been getting aid from here through various third countries." It added: "It is doubtful if the (Suharto) coup would ever had been attempted without the American show of strength in Vietnam or been sustained without the clandestine aid it had received indirectly from here."[103]

CIA case officer Ralph McGehee, having been assigned to East and Southeast Asia for nineteen years, alleged that the CIA was heavily involved in mass slaughter from 1965. His allegations were censored by the agency. McGehee described Suharto's Western-backed takeover as a 'model operation' for similar efforts later conducted against other countries, reporting that the agency had falsified information to implicate the PKI which led to the military reacting as they had wanted. "The CIA forged a document purporting to reveal a leftist plot... in 1965," he concluded.[104] Former State Department analyst and historian William Blum similarly observed:

What was the role, if any, of the CIA? Was the coup attempt instigated by an agent provocateur who spread the story of the Generals' Council and its imminent putsch? (The killing, or even the abduction, of six generals probably could not have been foreseen – three of them were actually slain resisting abduction.) Was PKI participation induced to provide the excuse for its destruction? There are, in fact, indications of an agent provocateur in the unfolding drama, one Kamarusaman bin-Ahmed Mubaidah, known as 'Sjam.' According to the later testimony of some of the arrested officers, it was Sjam who pushed the idea of the hostile Generals' Council and for the need to counteract it. At the trials and in the CIA Study, the attempt is made to establish that, in so doing, Sjam was acting on behalf of the PKI leader Aidit. Presentation of this premise may explain why the CIA took the unique step of publishing such a book; that is, to assign responsibility for

> *the coup attempt to the PKI so as to 'justify' the horror which followed. But Sjam could just as easily have been acting for the CIA and/or the generals in the same manner. He apparently was a trusted aide of Aidit and could have induced the PKI leader into the plot instead of the other way around. Sjam had a politically checkered and mysterious background, and his testimony at one of the trials, in which he appeared as a defendant, was aimed at establishing Aidit as the sole director of the coup attempt. The CIA, in its intimate involvement in Indonesian political affairs since at least the mid-1950s... had undoubtedly infiltrated the PKI at various levels, and the military even more so, and was thus in a good position to disseminate disinformation and plant the ideas for certain actions, whether through Sjam or others.*[105]

Neville Maxwell, a Senior Research Officer at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in Oxford University, similarly reported significant Western involvement in the coup writing:

> *A few years ago I was researching in Pakistan into the diplomatic background of the 1965 Indo-Pakistan conflict, and in foreign ministry papers to which I had been given access came across a letter to the then foreign minister, Mr Bhutto, from one of his ambassadors in Europe (I believe Mr J. A. Rahim, in Paris) reporting a conversation with a Dutch intelligence officer with NATO.*[iii] *According to my note of that letter, the officer had remarked to the Pakistani diplomat that Indonesia 'was ready to fall into the Western lap like a rotten apple.' Western intelligence agencies, he said, would organize a 'premature communist coup... [which would be] foredoomed to fail, providing a legitimate and welcome opportunity to the army to crush the communists and make Soekarno [Sukarno] a prisoner of the army's goodwill.' The ambassador's report was dated December 1964.*[106]

"Indonesia was poised at the razor's edge," U.S. ambassador to Australia Marshall Green, said, highlighting that he was "almost certain" action needed to be taken to change its political course in line with Western interests. "What we did we had to do, and you'd better be glad we did because if we hadn't Asia would be a different place today," he stated, stressing that Sukarno's overthrow and slaughter of the PKI as a key turning point for power trajectories in the region favouring the perpetuation of Western dominance.[107]

General Suharto became Indonesia's next president and remained in power for thirty-three years until 1998. His government aligned itself

iii The Dutch government still maintained special links within the country and were able to provide valuable support to Western efforts against the Indonesian state.

closely with Western interests and placed its advanced Soviet-supplied armaments at America's disposal, which helped undermine other governments opposed to Western aims in the region and beyond. For example when the U.S. air campaign in Vietnam had been seriously obstructed by North Vietnamese deployments of Soviet S-75 air defence systems, the post-coup Indonesian government provided the radars from these same systems to the CIA which were a tremendous help to developing electronic warfare countermeasures. These rendered Vietnamese defences temporarily ineffective and thus helped facilitate the mass bombing and napalm saturation of North Vietnamese cites.[108] Indonesian MiG-21 fighter aircraft, some of the most capable the USSR had ever exported, were also shipped to the United States and used to train pilots in how to neutralize them, which strengthened the Western position in many theatres across the world.[109]

Under the new military government the CONEFO, having been set to materialize in 1966 and be hosted in Jakarta, ceased to exist while Indonesia's support for GANEFO was also withdrawn. The Beijing-Pyongyang-Hanoi-Phnom Penh-Jakarta Axis was also dissolved. Jakarta quickly ended all diplomatic relations with China, after the close ties between the two Asian countries had long been viewed with much apprehension in the West. Targeting relations with China had been a specific CIA goal, with the agency's operations stipulating the need "to emphasize traditional Indonesian distrust of Mainland China and to portray the PKI as an instrument of Red Chinese imperialism."[110]

Under Suharto lucrative concessions to Western mining and oil companies were offered, with the country facing a growing environmental disaster in the subsequent decades largely as a result.[111] Transparency International in 2004 found Suharto to be the most corrupt politician in modern history, and he was found to have personally embezzled between $15 billion and $35 billion while in office with hundreds of billions more going to his ruling inner circle much of which served to enrich Western economies.[112] Causing very considerable suffering for the population over the following decades, and at the cost of up to 3 million lives, the Indonesian government's overthrow was a major turning point in the balance of power in East Asia and in the Cold War more generally in favour of Western

interests and removed a leading challenger to the perpetuation of Western hegemony.

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CHAPTER 5

America in the Philippines: Establishing a Colony and Later Neo-Colony in the Pacific

> The Americans found it hard to realise that in the eyes of Asia they had become almost a spearhead of imperialism.[1]
>
> – Clement Atlee

> A state in the grip of neo-colonialism is not master of its own destiny.[2]
>
> – Kwame Nkrumah

Genocide in the Philippines? How America Joined Europe in Colonizing in East Asia

In 1521 the Philippines became among the earliest territories in East Asia to be placed under Western colonial rule, with Spain invading and imposing its governance for over 377 years until 1898. This occupation ended only with Spain's defeat in the Spanish-American War, after which Philippine nationalists founded the First Philippine Republic and declared the beginning of the first period of self-rule in almost four centuries. The perpetuation of Western colonial rule was ensured, however, by Spain's decision to sell its colonial possession to the United States for $20 million as it withdrew. When the U.S. subsequently sent a force 50,000 strong to impose its governance and crush the Philippine Republic in its infancy, Japanese pan-Asian nationalists were the only source of limited aid and

armaments for the near defenceless state, which did not inherit a military force or trained personnel from the Spanish era.[i]

U.S. President William McKinley justified moves to intervene and subjugate the Philippines as a humanitarian intervention in line with the will of the Christian God, writing in 1899:

> *I went down on my knees and prayed to the Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night. And one night late it came to me this way – I don't know how it was, but it came: (1) That we could not give them [The Philippines] back to Spain – that would be cowardly and dishonourable; (2) that we could not turn them over to France or Germany – our commercial rivals in the Orient – that would be bad business and discreditable; (3) that we could not leave them to themselves – they were unfit for self-government – and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain's was; and (4) that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize then Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow-men for whom Christ also died.*[3]

McKinley's war to do "the very best we could by them" and fulfil a "moral duty" to God resulted in the killings of hundreds of thousands, severe torture of dissidents, the destruction of population centres and the forcing of populations into concentration camps, while enriching the United States considerably. Leading American statesmen proudly referred to subjugating of the Philippines as imperialism, and while the U.S. had long sought to distance itself from the conduct of European empires it came to mirror them very closely in practice. Deeming the population unfit to rule themselves for centuries proved an effective pretext for colonial wars by both the U.S. and by European powers, many of which resulted in genocide. U.S. Senator Albert J. Beveridge, a much renowned historian and intellectual leader, thus stated regarding intentions towards the territory: "The Philippines are ours forever. They are not capable of self-government. How could they be? They are not a self-governing race... We

i Leading Japanese scholar in international law Tachi Sakutaro was one of many to see the U.S. invasion as a threat, stressing that Americans need "consider how threatening it must be for Japan to have the United States occupying the Philippines. It is, indeed like Japan occupying Ecuador." (Hotta, Eri, *Pan Asianism and Japan's War 1931–1945*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007 (p. 97).)

will not abandon our opportunity in the Orient. We will not renounce our part in the mission of our race."[4]

The landing of U.S. forces sparked hostilities that quickly escalated into a three-year war. Leader of Philippine independence forces Emilio Aguinaldo, later in January 1899 elected the country's first president, proclaimed soon after the American invasion began: "My government cannot remain indifferent in view of such a violent and aggressive seizure of a portion of its territory by a nation which arrogated to itself the title champion of oppressed nations. Thus it is that my government is disposed to open hostilities if the American troops attempt to take forcible possession of the Visayan Islands." He proclaimed: "I denounce these acts before the world, in order that the conscience of mankind may pronounce its infallible verdict as to who are the true oppressors of nations and the tormentors of human kind."[5]

The American war effort quickly came to target the entire Philippine population indiscriminately, with the U.S. State Department estimating 220,000 were killed of whom 200,000 were civilians.[6] Other sources strongly disputed these claims, with the People's History of the United States claiming a death toll of 300,000 in the small province of Bantangas alone – potentially indicating a death toll of several million across the country. U.S. Brigadier General J. Franklin Bell estimated a death toll of 600,000 on Luzon island alone,[7] while a number of studies, such as that of political scientist Eqbal Ahmad, put the death toll higher at around 3 million Filipinos.[8] A study by historian Luzviminda Francisco came to 1.4 million dead from 1899 to 1905 alone.[9] Historian E. San Juan also reached a figure of 1.4 million killed, arguing that this constituted an act of genocide by the United States against the Philippines.[10] The population at the time was estimated to be between 6 and 8 million.[11]

Lacking modern firearms and outnumbered, Philippine forces suffered considerable losses and from November 1899 adapted to waging a guerrilla war better suited to their asymmetric capabilities which took full advantage of their familiarity with the archipelago's terrain.[12] This proved significantly more successful, with U.S. forces left vulnerable and responding by adopting scorched earth tactics and the targeting of civilian population centres in areas suspected of aiding guerrillas. The resulting

toll on the republican forces was heavy, but considerably heavier still for civilians.[13] According to the testimonies of U.S. Marines, they were under orders to turn the island of Samar into a "howling wilderness" and maximize casualties which led to the targeting of civilians and their property on a large scale. The age limit for targeting civilians was reportedly "everything over ten [years old]."[14] A letter from a captain from Kansas regarding the conduct of American forces read: "[the regional capital of] Caloocan was supposed to contain 17,000 inhabitants. The Twentieth Kansas [division] swept through it, and now Caloocan contains not one living native." A private from the same unit wrote that he had "with my own hand set fire to over fifty houses of Filipinos after the victory at Caloocan. Women and children were wounded by our fire."[15]

Scorched earth campaigns destroyed entire villages and the use of torture was widespread. This included frequent use of the infamous 'water cure,' which American Lieutenant Grover Flint described as follows:

> *A man is thrown down on his back and three or four men sit or stand on his arms and legs and hold him down; and either a gun barrel or a rifle barrel or a carbine barrel or a stick as big as a belaying pin – that is, with an inch circumference – is simply thrust into his jaws and his jaws are thrust back, and, if possible, a wooden log or stone is put under his head or neck, so he can be held more firmly. In the case of very old men I have seen their teeth fall out, – I mean when it was done a little roughly. He is simply held down and then water is poured onto his face down his throat and nose from a jar; and that is kept up until the man gives some sign or becomes unconscious. And, when he becomes unconscious, he is simply rolled aside and he is allowed to come to. In almost every case the men have been a little roughly handled. They were rolled aside rudely, so that water was expelled. A man suffers tremendously, there is no doubt about it. His sufferings must be that of a man who is drowning, but cannot drown.*[16]

President Theodore Roosevelt referred to the water cure as "an old Filipino method of mild torture."[17] Its application in the Philippines was far from mild, however, and it was frequently a means by which U.S. forces would torture their prisoners to death. A report from the time stated: "Soldier who was with General Funston had stated that he helped to administer the water cure to one hundred and sixty natives, all but twenty-six of whom died."[18] In his book *The Forging of the American Empire* Sidney Lens noted:

> *If the prisoner tries to keep his mouth closed, his nose is pinched to cut off the air and force him to open his mouth, or a bamboo stick is put in the opening. In this way water is steadily poured in, one, two, three, four, five gallons, until the body becomes 'an object frightful to contemplate.' In this condition, of course, speech is impossible, so the water is squeezed out of the victim, sometimes naturally, and sometimes – as a young soldier with a smile told the correspondent – 'we jump on them to get it out quick.' One or two such treatments and the prisoner either talks or dies.*[19]

The water cure would be used against civilians in future American wars, and seventy years later in Vietnam saw water mixed with spices or soaps used to torture women suspected of aiding insurgents.[20]

As would be the case in America's future wars in the region, the targeted East Asian population were extensively dehumanized which was key to facilitating atrocities against them. In November 1901 the Manila correspondent of the Philadelphia Ledger wrote: "The present war is no bloodless, opera bouffe engagement; our [American] men have been relentless, have killed to exterminate men, women, children, prisoners and captives, active insurgents and suspected people from lads of ten up, the idea prevailing that the Filipino as such was little better than a dog." The report noted regarding the resulting conduct of U.S. forces: "Our soldiers have pumped salt water into men to make them talk, and have taken prisoners people who held up their hands and peacefully surrendered, and an hour later, without an atom of evidence to show that they were even insurrectos [insurgents], stood them on a bridge and shot them down one by one, to drop into the water below and float down, as examples to those who found their bullet loaded corpses."[21]

British writer Geoff Simons described how the conditioning of American personnel led to atrocities as follows:

> *America's onslaught on the Philippines in 1898 was characterized by familiar racist slogans. Thus the American whites claimed that the native peoples engaged in 'base treachery, revolting cruelty'; a U.S. general depicted the Filipinos as 'gorillas' who hid in the bush; and Theodore Roosevelt saw the conquest of the Philippines as a triumph of Christian civilization over 'the black chaos of savagery and barbarism.' In this racist climate, the native Filipinos were 'niggers,' 'savages,' 'gugus'; a U.S. private, talking of the 'goo-goo' hunt, commented that 'no cruelty is too severe for these brainless monkeys, who can appreciate no sense of honour, kindness or justice'; and yet again American soldiers saw themselves as involved in 'Injun warfare,' a war with an honourless indigenous force.*

> *The perennial slogans were dusted off and adapted to the new situation: 'the only good Filipino is a dead one. Take no prisoners. Lead is cheaper than rice.'*[22]

Letters by American personnel would years later give valuable insights into prevailing conduct and mentalities.[ii] One volunteer from Washington wrote: "Our fighting blood was up, and we all wanted to kill niggers... This shooting human beings beats rabbit hunting all to pieces."[23] An unknown soldier from New York wrote:

> *The town of Titatia was surrendered to us a few days ago, and two companies occupy the same. Last night one of our boys was found shot and his stomach cut open. Immediately orders were received from General Wheaton to burn the town and kill every native in sight; which was done to a finish. About 1,000 men, women and children were reported killed. I am probably growing hard-hearted, for I am in my glory when I can sight my gun on some dark skin and pull the trigger.*[24]

As was often the case, retribution was indiscriminate and the entire population was targeted. Corporal Sam Gillis recalled: "We make everyone get into his house by seven p.m., and we only tell a man once. If he refuses, we shoot him. We killed over 300 natives the first night. They tried to set the town on fire. If they fire a shot from the house we burn the house down and every house near it, and shoot the natives, so they are pretty quiet in town now."[25]

In many areas the population was forced into concentration camps to isolate them from the guerrilla fighters they were often suspected of

ii General Arthur MacArthur reckoned that supposedly inferior races succumbed to wounds more easily than Anglo-Saxons. His son Douglas was to become Field Marshal of the Philippine Army and later the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in the Asia-Pacific and Commander-in-Chief of the United Nations Command, and was to wage wars against the Japanese, Chinese and the Koreans overseeing severe war crimes committed against all of them. He would voice similar attitudes to his father with statements such as that 'Chinamen can't fight.' Such concepts were common, with British author Rudyard Kipling, writing *The White Man's Burden* in 1899 as a response to the American war in the Philippines, portraying the population as "fluttered folk and wild... sullen people, half devil and half child." (Simons, Geoff, *The Vietnam Syndrome: Impact on U.S. Foreign Policy*, Abingdon, Palgrave Macmillan, 1998 (p. 125).)

supporting. Camps were generally overcrowded which led to the spread of disease and often resulted high death rates for their inhabitants. In some camps death rates were as high as 20 percent. Philippine historian Arnaldo Dumindin wrote "One camp was two miles by one mile [3.2 by 1.6 km] in area and home to some 8,000 Filipinos. Men were rounded up for questioning, tortured, and summarily executed."[26] In Batangas Province operations under General Franklin Bell was described as "relentless." Bell ordered that the populations of Batangas and Laguna provinces be forced into concentration camps, with anyone found outside ordered to be shot. All the land, houses and other valuables that could not be carried into the camps would be burned by U.S. forces. One of these camps was referred to by commanders as the "suburbs of Hell." General Bell insisted, however, that these camps were built to "protect friendly natives from insurgents, assure them an adequate food supply" as well as to teach them "proper sanitary standards," although sanitation was extremely poor which took a heavy toll on the health of the population.[27]

U.S. forces repeatedly proved to be a far greater danger to the population than republican forces, with the majority of civilian deaths in the war being caused by disease that resulted from conditions in American concentration camps. By cutting off their means of supporting guerrilla forces, however, use of camps ultimately proved successful and were key to America's eventual victory. The republicans' ties to their support base were severed and the movement thus failed to sustain itself, with the First Philippine Republic forcibly dissolved in 1901 and the United States claiming the Philippines as its possession.

Second War in the Philippines: Quashing Popular Resistance

Following the subjugation of the First Philippine Republic the American colonial administration of the Philippines faced few serious challenges to its existence. This only changed after December 1941 when the Japanese Empire launched a swift campaign to drive Western empires out of their East Asian colonies, with the last U.S. forces being defeated in May 1942.

The result was the re-emergence of a nationalist independence movement which began to actively resist the Japanese themselves. The Hukbalahap movement, or Huks, meaning 'People's Army Against Japan,' were at the centre of these efforts and proved a thorn in the side of Japanese forces for almost four years by waging a guerrilla insurgency. The Communist Party of the Philippines notably played a key role in organizing them.

When U.S. forces returned in October 1944 to retake the Philippines they notably often prioritized targeting Huk guerrillas over the Japanese themselves. Having grown into a powerful, organized and popular movement, their independence made them a potential challenge to reimposition of American rule despite common animosity towards Japan.[28] While Huk forces frequently came to the aid of American personnel against Japanese forces, U.S. forces often allowed the Japanese to attack Huk units.[29] Many in the United States considered the Huks to be a proxy of an 'International Communist Conspiracy,' which provided a valuable pretext for targeting them due to the strength of anti-communist sentiment in America. The threat the Huks posed, however, was not a result of their tenuous links to communist ideology, but rather the fact that their goal of national independence and genuine sovereignty threatened American imperial designs just as the First Philippine Republic had before them. The Huks were not expected to accept either a return to colonial status under U.S. rule or a position of subservience as an American client state.

Much like in the preceding war against the Philippine Republic, after the Japanese surrender the Philippine population were widely targeted indiscriminately on suspicion of aiding Huk forces. Local governments the Huks had helped to establish, through which communities had begun to rule themselves as Japanese forces had withdrawn, were quickly dismantled and suspected Huk supporters terrorized by U.S. and local auxiliary forces. High-ranking members of the Huk movement were sought out and imprisoned.[30]

After over 400 years of Spanish then American rule, the Philippines suffered from grinding poverty, illiteracy and poverty-caused illnesses such as tuberculosis and beriberi. The Huks supported land reform, something so popular that even the U.S. colonial administration had been forced to pay lip service to despite not having carried out any such reform

during their forty-year occupation. The Huks were also keen to industrialize the Philippines which was strongly opposed by the United States. Industrialization and land reform were considered key to raising the country from poverty, much as it had in the USSR turning a peasant society experiencing frequent famines and widespread disease into a global superpower within fifteen years and creating a model to which much of the third world at the time aspired. Preventing such a process from occurring in East Asia was central to sustaining Western hegemony in the region (see Chapter 1), and leaving the country backward and dependent ensured American industries would maintain what has been called a "veritable playground in the Philippines."[31] Indeed, President McKinley's postmaster general, Charles Emory, had stated shortly after the U.S. first invaded the Philippines regarding intentions for the country: "What we want is a market for our surplus."[32] The Huk movement's developmentalist plans were thus a threat to U.S. interests, with a lack of education, industry or any substantial research or development ensuring the resource rich country was perfectly suited to become an American dependency.

Almost immediately after Japan's surrender the United States began equipping a force of 50,000 Philippine personnel as part of a broad trend towards militarization of Western clients to provide support in the Cold War.[33] These forces were later deployed to Korea and Vietnam to support American-led war efforts. Another more immediate reason for rearmament was the need to suppress insurgents domestically, with military efforts against the Huks continuing in the aftermath of Japan's defeat.[34] According to the *New York Times* the start of combat preparations was "interpreted by soldiers and certain Filipino newspapers as the preparation for the repression of possible uprisings in the Philippines by disgruntled farm tenant groups."[35] U.S. personnel protested being kept in the Philippines for counterinsurgency, but before Japan had been defeated campaigns across the region had already begun to quash forces such as the Huks that had been given breathing space by Japanese military victories and were seen as possible challenges to Western empire.

The Philippines was granted a token independence under the Treaty of General Relations in July 1946, under terms strongly favouring the United States and under a largely American educated elite aligned with

Washington. Terms of independence guaranteed the U.S. substantial permanent military deployments in the country for ninety-nine years including guaranteed sites for twenty-three military bases on 600,000 acres of land across thirteen provinces. Unlike basing arrangements in NATO states, there were no provisions for early termination and the U.S. was not automatically committed to defending the Philippines. The Companion Military Assistance Pact denied the Philippines of self-determination in military affairs, prohibiting it from purchasing even light arms without Washington's approval. This ensured not only a sizeable captive marked for the American defence industry, but also continued dependence on the U.S. for security. It mirrored the European colonial practice of establishing exclusive trading rights with subjugated countries that banned imports from rivals. The pact prevented any foreigners other than Americans from performing any function for or with the Philippine armed forces without Washington's approval. By 1950, the United States had provided the Philippines with over $200 million of military equipment and supplies, and the country's armed forces were reorganized under an American-selected leadership to counter U.S. adversaries.[36] The Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group reorganized the Philippine intelligence capabilities and defence department and chose Ramon Magsaysay as its head, forming the Philippine army into battalions trained specifically for counterinsurgency.[37]

The Huks took part in the April 1946 national elections as part of the Democratic Alliance of socialist political groups three months before scheduled independence. After three were elected to the senate and seven to the house, Democratic Alliance members were prevented from taking their seats based on unproven charges of election fraud with their cases never reviewed by the electoral tribunal. Their appointment had contravened U.S. interests as Washington sought a parliamentary majority for then President of the Commonwealth of the Philippines Manuel Roxas who Washington favoured to become the first president after independence.[38] Without the Democratic Alliance, President Roxas' majority could push the Philippine-U.S. Trade Act which passed only narrowly and yielded the U.S. tremendous privileges and concessions in the Philippine economy particularly in developing its resources and operating its utilities.[39] Washington granted independence two days after the act passed.

American historian George E. Taylor described the Philippines' independence as "marked by lavish expression of mutual good will, by partly fulfilled promises, and by a restoration of the old relationship in almost everything except in name ... Many demands were made of the Filipinos for the commercial advantage of the United States, but none for the social and political advantage of the Philippines."[40] It was critical for Washington to ensure, as colonial powers most often did when agreeing to end formal rule over their possessions, that the groundwork was laid to ensure a perpetuation of economic relationships which would strongly favour the interests of the former occupier at the expense of the formerly occupied. Critics slammed the Trade Act's passage an inexcusable surrender of national sovereignty.[41]

The Roxas government's forces quickly initiated a wave of violence in rural areas targeting the Huks' suspected sympathisers, with hundreds of farmers and their community leaders killed, jailed, tortured, maimed, or disappeared based on allegations of support for the insurgents. Hit men in the employ of many of the country's landlords, who opposed the Huks due to their pledge to initiate land reform, provided support. The Huks' ranks nevertheless swelled with peasants as a response to their mistreatment and to the misconduct of the government, which was far more central to their motivations and appeal than communist ideology. The *New York Times* thus reported "The Communist Hukbalahap rebellion is generally regarded as an outgrowth of the misery and discontent among the peasants of Central Luzon." A later U.S. Army study reported the Huks' "main impetus was peasant grievances, not Leninist [communist] designs."[42] From the outset targeting the Huks' support base was seen as the key to defeating them, much as had been done to undermine the Philippine Republic's guerrilla forces forty years prior. Unlike the previous war, which had taken place at the turn of the century in the colonial era, it was no longer feasible to put the country's rural population into concentration camps meaning new methods of eroding guerillas' popular support base had to be explored.

Head of CIA clandestine paramilitary operations in the Philippines, Lieutenant Colonel Edward G. Lansdale, played a central role in pioneering new methods of counterinsurgency against the Huks. Lansdale was initially struck by the repressive and brutal nature of the government the U.S. had

installed, recalling his surprise at hearing informed local civilian acquaintances elaborate on its conduct towards the population. He observed a state "rotten with corruption" from the highest levels down to policemen in the street, highlighting that President Elpidio Quirino himself, who had taken power in 1948 following President Roxas' death, had been elected through "extensive fraud." "The Huks were right," and represented the "wave of the future," Lansdale concluded, stressing that violence was the only way the population could realize change and achieve a government which represented their interests.[43] Others observing much the same situation on the ground took action, such as American airman William J. Pomeroy of the 5th Air Force who after fighting against the Huks was utterly disillusioned and later returned to the Philippines to fight alongside them.[44]

Undeterred by his observations, Lansdale had little choice but to persuade himself that if the Huks took over there would only be another privileged elite running another form of unjust government. Not to do so would have ended his career. By the next chapter in his reminiscences he seemed to have convinced himself that he was working with those committed to "defend human liberty in the Philippines."[45] Lansdale created the Civil Affairs Office and used psychological warfare to gain an advantage in operations against the Huks. The office's operations were based around the idea that popular insurgencies such as that of the Huks could not be defeated by use of force alone.

With use of concentration camps that had turned the tide of the last war no longer feasible in the post-colonial era, due primarily to associations with recent Nazi German practices and the risk of alienating international opinion, other means of isolating popular guerrillas from their support base were explored. This led Lansdale's psychological warfare team to innovate radical and often ingenious solutions after they carefully studied the superstitions of peasant populations in areas which supported the Huks. They learned their lore, taboos, myths and other information key to providing a deeper understanding of the population and how their support for the Huks could be eroded. Popular superstitions in particular were exploited to reach desired outcomes. The Huk fighters, themselves mostly peasants who had taken up arms, were also susceptible to these psychological warfare

operations. The following are examples of operations by CIA psychological warfare specialists to undermine the Huks:

- Lansdale's men flew over Huk supporting areas in a small airplane hidden by cloud cover and broadcast mysterious curses on any villagers who would provide the Huks with food or shelter. This terrified locals and starved many of the Huk units into surrender.[46]
- One psywar operation played on the fear of the *ausang*, a mythical vampire of legend. A psywar team planted rumours in a town that the neighbouring hills where Huks fighters were based were home to an *ausang*. Two nights later, after giving these rumours time to circulate and themselves time to get up the hill, the psywar team ambushed a Huk patrol and took the last man silently as they passed. They punctured his neck with two holes, as a vampire would, and held him upside down until the blood drained out. They then put the corpse back on the trail. When the Huks, having heard the rumours themselves, saw their comrade struck by an *ausang*, they fled the area and it fell to government forces.[47]
- The Economic Development Corps was created to adopt one of the Huks' most attractive pledges – land redistribution – to win popular support and undermine a primary motivation for supporting the insurgents. The corps would lure Huk fighters with a program of resettlement on their own patch of farmland, with cash, seeds and loans. Relatively very few responded, however. These efforts ceased when the Huks were defeated, and were not a genuine attempt to solve land issues.
- Lansdale's team produced films and radio broadcasts which would justify the government's actions to the population. Government agents were simultaneously infiltrated into the ranks of the Huks to provide information and sow dissent.
- Attempts were made to modify the behaviour of government forces and curtail their abuses of the rural population. The Huks had long followed a strict code of conduct which had gained them widespread support, and this was particularly apparent when contrasted with the common abuses committed by government forces. A correspondent from the *Saturday Evening Post* had written that the police in the Philippines were "bands of uniformed thieves and rapists, more feared than bandits... the army was little better."[48]

- Efforts were made to tarnish the Huks' image, with government forces disguised as Huks allowed to pillage villages and wreak havoc. Retired U.S. Air Force Colonel L. Fletcher Prouty, said this technique was "developed to a high art in the Philippines." Disguised soldiers were "set upon the unwary village in the grand manner of a Cecil B. DeMille production."[49]

Prouty was the focal point for contacts between the Pentagon and the CIA for nine years. He described another strategy by which the reputation of the Huks was tarnished and the nature of the conflict obfuscated which also served to cover for the government's corrupt practices, stating:

> *In the Philippines, lumbering interests and major sugar interests have forced tens of thousands of simple, backward villagers to leave areas where they have lived for centuries. When these poor people flee to other areas, it should be quite obvious that they in turn then infringe upon the territorial rights of other villagers or landowners. This creates violent rioting or at least sporadic outbreaks of banditry, that last lowly recourse of dying and terrorized people. Then when the distant government learns of the banditry and rioting, it must offer some safe explanation. The last thing that regional government would want to do would be to say that the huge lumbering or paper interests had driven the people out of their ancestral homeland. In the Philippines it is customary for the local/regional government to get a 10 percent rake-off on all such enterprise and for national politicians to get another 10 percent. So the safe explanation becomes 'Communist-inspired subversive insurgency.' The word for this in the Philippines is Huk.*[50]

Where Lansdale's team were effective in eroding the Huks' power, CIA efforts to manipulate Philippine politics proved highly successful with stage-managed elections and widespread disinformation campaigns among other methods turning the public against any who opposed the U.S.-favoured status quo. In 1953 Ramon Magsaysay, the former American-selected defence department head, was elected president. It was said that Lansdale working for the CIA had "invented Magsaysay," with corruption and misconduct in the election process being highly prevalent.[51] The National Movement for Free Elections, a CIA front organization, played a central role in running Magsaysay's election campaign backed by funding and media support that candidates lacking America's favour could not hope to contend with. Elpidio Quirino who ran against Magsaysay had his drinks drugged by the CIA on one occasion before he

gave a speech to make him appear incoherent.[52] Magsaysay did win the elections, but the CIA had smuggled in guns for use in a coup in case he lost.[53] No chances were taken, and the Philippines was to be under U.S. control regardless of who was elected.

Magsaysay was managed by the CIA and in turn governed in compliance with U.S. interests. His speeches were always written by Lansdale's teams. On one occasion he reportedly insisted he be allowed to read a speech written by a Filipino, to which Lansdale reacted in such a rage that he knocked him unconscious.[54] The relationship between the dominating American CIA colonel and the Philippine politician was highly symbolic of that between the Western superpower and its Asian client state. The illusion of genuine independence and democratic rule of the people made continued U.S. control over the country sustainable, effectively silencing pro-independence movements and maintaining the American image abroad as an anti-colonialist power and friend of the third world. As U.S. Senator Albert J. Beveridge had proclaimed half a century prior: "The Philippines are ours forever" – with a CIA-managed client government being more effective than openly ruling from Washington.[55] Similar relationships emerged across the third world as independence granted rather than won by Western colonies was often nominal only representing a transition from direct colonial rule to neo-colonialism.

Paid editors and journalists were widely used by the CIA to support the President Magsaysay's domestic programs, which were consistently drafted in line with American interests as ensured by the agency. CIA assets in the press were also paid to defame newspaper columnists and others who criticized the U.S. or the subservient nature of the relationship between Manilla and Washington.[56] Magsaysay's assistant Sherman Adams wrote that the Philippines' president "sent word to Eisenhower that he would do anything the United States wanted him to do – even though his own foreign minister took the opposite view."[57] This relationship made Philippines an ideal Western client state – resulting in it being referred to as "democracy's showcase in Asia."[58] This was in line with a prevailing trend where the level of democracy a state was portrayed as having depended heavily on how closely its policies aligned with Western interests. Thus the Philippines was referred to as an example of effective democracy while

states not aligned with Western interests such as Indonesia, no matter how representative their governments were, were more likely to be termed 'authoritarian,' 'dictatorships' or 'undemocratic.' Other than a few absolute monarchies this applied consistently to Western clients from the military government in Taiwan to the Syngman Rhee regime of South Korea, both prone to mass slaughter of their civilian populations, which were referred to as democratic and 'freedom loving' for aligning with Western interests.

By 1953 the Huks had largely lost support and were scattered and demoralized. The impoverishment of the peasantry as a whole was also thought to have played a part, and may have led to malnutrition and disease among Huk fighters at a time when much of the rural population were struggling to feed themselves. The Huks were also lacking in weapons and equipment, forced to rely on whatever they could salvage from the Japanese occupation period, while government forces were kept heavily armed. Although depicting the Huks as Soviet or Chinese agents was part of the U.S. campaign to delegitimize them, their lack of material support from or even known ties to other states did much to undermine this narrative.[59]

While Colonel Lansdale had first seen the Huks as the "wave of the future," the course of the Philippines' history had been altered dramatically and for a second time U.S. hegemony had been imposed and a popular independence movement quashed. This was all achieved under altruistic pretexts – in the words of President McKinley to "uplift and civilize then Christianize them." With the Huks defeated most of the government's social programs made to undermine their appeal were terminated. As historian George Taylor noted, "since the destruction of Huk military power the social and political program that made the accomplishment possible has to a large extent fallen by the wayside."[60] The land reform and industrialization promised by the movement and intended to modernize the country was never implemented, ensuring the Philippines would remain indefinitely impoverished and in the third world.

The CIA's power to influence political development remained, a notable example being the character assassination of President Magsaysay's chief political opponent and a stern critic of American policy Senator Claro M. Recto. The agency planted stories that he was a communist Chinese agent and prepared packages of condoms with holes in them for public

distribution labelled 'Courtesy of Claro M. Recto – the People's Friend.'[61] When the senator continued to threaten Magsaysay's position, and thus American interests, the CIA planned to kill him. A substance was prepared to poison him, but the agency in the end decided against it.[62]

In 1957 the Philippine government outlawed communism and the Huks entirely, somewhat ironically under the pretext that the Huks aimed to place the country "under the control and domination of an alien power."[63] That year a new candidate was sought out by the CIA after Magsaysay died in a plane crash, with Diosdado Macapagal offering himself as a client and becoming president in 1961. He had provided the agency with political information for years, and in return received extensive financial support for his campaign as Magsaysay had before him. America's *Reader's Digest* thus called Macapagal's campaign "certainly a demonstration of democracy in action."[64] The CIA's support was itself against Philippine law, which stated under Article X, Section 81 of the election code that no foreigner was permitted "to aid any candidate or political party, directly or indirectly, or take part in or influence in any manner any election, or to contribute or make any expenditure in connection with any election campaign or partisan political activity."[65] Extensive electoral interference was practiced across U.S. client states in the region and wider world, a prominent other example being Japan where the CIA similarly intervened in elections to support candidates who would further American interests after the end of direct U.S. military rule in 1952.[66]

With the Philippines secure the United States had an excellent staging ground for operations throughout East Asia, with U.S. Military facilities there playing important roles in campaigns against Indonesia, Vietnam and other targets that challenged Western hegemony in the region as the Huks had done. Under the guise of a private philanthropic organization, the Freedom Company of the Philippines formed by none other than Colonel Lansdale arranged for Philippine combatants to be sent to Vietnam as the first foreign auxiliaries for U.S. operations.[67] One veteran CIA officer described Landsale's Filipinos as men who "would slit their grandmother's throat for a dollar eighty-five," with these veterans playing important roles in future campaigns.[68]

The Philippine government itself would send American trained and equipped forces, "little American armies" as they were often called, to fight in Vietnam and Korea alongside the United States. The Philippine population funded these war efforts through their taxes, with the acquisition and operation of U.S.-made equipment placing considerable strains on the already impoverished country's budgets.[69] The art of counterinsurgency that Lansdale had worked towards perfecting in the Philippines would be further developed and widely employed elsewhere, while Lansdale himself would go on to apply them in operations against Cuba and from 1954 in Vietnam.[70]

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CHAPTER 6

War in Korea: A New Frontier for American Empire

> The evils of tyranny are rarely seen but by him who resists it.[1]
>
> – John Hay

> I had seen the war-battered cities of Europe; but I had not seen devastation until I had seen Korea.[2]
>
> – Chief Justice William O. Douglas

American Military Rule in Southern Korea

Following the surrender of the Japanese Empire, the Korean Peninsula increasingly came to represent a focal point in conflict between East Asian nationalist forces and Western ambitions for hegemony over the region. This primarily materialized through a war between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK – otherwise North Korea), and the United States, which after beginning in 1950 came to represent the longest war in history between two industrial powers and would continue for over seventy years. Preceding the outbreak of hostilities, however, the United States would pit itself against nationalist and leftist political forces in southern Korea in an attempt to overthrow the existing local government and impose a new regime aligned with its own interests.

In the early stages of Imperial Japanese expansion Korea had been one of the first territories to be annexed in 1910, following five years of occupation imposed in the aftermath of Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War which ended the rule of the Korean Choson dynasty. Under Choson rule the country had been forced into unequal treaties with Western imperial

powers including the granting of immunity from Korean law to Westerners under extraterritoriality agreements and provision of a most favoured nation status and extensive trade privileges to the United States formalized under the Shufeldt Treaty. Japan's subsequent annexation was nevertheless recognized by the Western powers, with the British Foreign Ministry acknowledging: "Japan reserves special interests, political, military and economic, in Korea the United Kingdom acquiesces to the right of Japan to take measures in Korea for guidance, administration and protection and promotion of these interests."[3] Other Western empires took similar stances.

Japan's surrender in August 1945 renewed hopes for Korean independence with nationalists proclaiming a new government – the People's Republic of Korea – within a month. By inclusion of the entire population the republican government gained strong popular legitimacy, with its responsibilities including managing rice collections and food stocks and redistributing land formerly held by Japan and its collaborators. The republic governed through a network of People's Committees across Korea under the leadership of Lyuh Woon Hyung, a former member of the Goryeo Communist Party who played a leading role from 1944 in laying the ground for a new independent state and moving to unify the political left and right under the cause of national independence. Popular policies included provision of inalienable individual rights and freedoms for the first time in Korean history – including rights for peasants to own land, nationalization of major Japanese industries, equality for women, labour law reforms, prohibition of child labour and "positive opposition to any foreign influences interfering with the domestic affairs of the state."[4]

The republic was, according to U.S. military reports, operating successfully without foreign interference.[5] The following observations by U.S. officers in Korea were later conveyed in a memorandum on November 7, 1945: "The People's Committee in the more rural districts is well organized and has a large and influential membership... they do not appear to be gangsters, hoodlums or [a] 'bad element' organization, but on the contrary a representative group of Korean people."[6] Edward Grant Meade, who worked under the U.S. Military in Korea, referred to the republic as the "de facto government" on the Korean peninsula – the positions of which "reflected with reasonable accuracy the views of the Korean majority."[7]

Professor of history at New York University Monica Kim noted regarding the independent establishment of a sovereign Korean state: "Using the network of People's Committees already in place on the ground, the Korean populace had clearly decided to act on the structural change they wanted to see happen, which was the immediate replacement of markers of Japanese colonial sovereignty with local Korean authority. The Korean populace was not waiting for the U.S. Military to 'grant' them their independence."[8]

The People's Republic and hopes for a fully sovereign, genuinely nationalist and progressive government would be short lived in southern Korea, with U.S. forces arriving in the country in September 1945 and forcibly dismantling the state. On August 14, 1945 two lower level officials from the Pentagon's Strategy Policy Committee, Dean Rusk and Charles Bonesteel, had drafted plans to split Korea between the USSR and U.S. along the 38th parallel with each responsible for dismantling the Japanese administration in the north and south respectively.[9] The People's Republic was forcibly dissolved in the south on December 12 under the newly declared United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK), which ruled southern Korea under orders from Washington. Also outlawed were participation in the People's Committees, intent to publish or circulate materials on behalf their behalf, and displays of the republic's insignia, flags or uniforms.[10]

American designs in Korea notably closely mirrored those in the Philippines, with USAMGIK indicating from an early stage plans for application of a "Philippines model." The first American civilian officers deployed in Korea had received nine months of training for the Philippines "with no more than a single hour's lecture on Korea" – according to USAMGIK vice consul Gregory Henderson.[11] When a U.S. occupation was first planned U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt had announced that Korea's independence would take the same course as the Philippines – specifically a "forty-year tutelage."[12] At the Yalta Conference in February 1945 he put the figure at "about fifty years," although the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin strongly urged him to consider a shorter period.[13] Much like in the Philippines this eventual independence was to be nominal only, with the planned occupation under a colonial trusteeship strongly opposed by Korean nationalists and the country's government in exile.

Imposition of American rule was justified on the basis that Korea could not yet be a nation state and the Koreans not yet citizens as political authenticity lay exclusively with the United States.[14] Creation of a racialized theorization of the Korean population provided pretext for the USMGIK to dismiss the political structures developed by Koreans in favour of those chosen by Americans.[15] Much like in the Philippines and across European colonial possessions,[16] Koreans were portrayed as unable to govern themselves. Second Lieutenant Joseph Farell serving under USAMGIK, for example, stated: "To describe the average mentality of the South Korean ROK [citizen]...I would judge the [level of the] average ROK as being that of at least a seven year old boy,"[17] with similar statements made widely by Americans responsible for ruling to justify the occupation.[18] While this narrative was convenient, it directly contradicted reports by Western observers attesting to the People's Republic's effective self-rule.

Ernst Fraenkel, an influential jurist and leading advisor for USAMGIK, summarized his observations of American military rule as follows: "Military occupation of a 'liberated country' is basically self-contradictory."[19] The military government's goal was to remake southern Korea into a "virulently anti-Communist" state indefinitely intertwined with American material and political interests.[20] Protests against American rule, described by Western observers as "absolutely ordered and peaceful," were widespread, with American bans on public protest and public assembly harshly criticized.[21] As the governor Lieutenant General John R. Hodge observed: "The Koreans want their independence more than any one thing and want it now."[22] Hodge noted regarding U.S. attitudes during the occupation: "Americans are ignorant of Korean customs, show no appreciation of Korean art or culture, and openly ridicule the idea that there can be any good in anything Korean."[23] The general's office observed: "Americans act as though Koreans were a conquered nation rather than a liberated people."[24]

Prevailing American attitudes were perhaps best summarized by the *Chicago Tribune*, which wrote: "The worse you treat the Koreans... the more he likes you. The only things they understand are the ball bat and the pick handle."[25] Staff sergeant Robert H. Moyer who served in Korea was one of many to highlight that the "Koreans considered us as another occupier of their county" and that "they disliked us," highlighting that there were

concerns for the safety of American personnel if walking off post alone.[26] Indeed, even many of those South Koreans considered Americanized before the war, those who "went to school in the USA, smoked USA cigarettes, spoke American," appeared to loathe the occupation and would go on to side with North Korean forces when the Korean War broke out.[27] The lifting of price controls by USAMGIK led Koreans from across the political spectrum to quickly lament that life had been better under Japanese rule, with significant numbers starving to death as rice was hoarded by speculators then sold for alcohol production.[28]

USAMGIK's unpopularity resulted in strict restrictions on rights to political assembly or to criticize American military rule, with several political parties banned and peaceful opposition to the imposition of foreign authority effectively prohibited.[29] A state of emergency was declared and the American Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) was deployed. The CIC was referred to Captain Kenneth MacDougall who served under USAMGIK as "well known by the local populace" and "took a hand in manipulating local politics." This included raids on the headquarters of undesirable political parties,[30] and infiltration of undesirable political organizations using trained informants.[31] As CIC agent William J. Tigue observed: "For the early months of the occupation, CIC was God in Korea as far as the police and the general populace was concerned."[32] Instilling a fear of the CIC was key to establishing the rule of the U.S. Military, and later of the American appointed South Korean government.[33] As First Lieutenant Jack Sells of the 11th CIC Detachment noted: "The letters 'CIC' strike fear into the hearts of all Koreans."[34] CIC Master Sergeant Joseph Gorman similarly described the corps as "very much feared."[35] The CIC was widely likened by the population to the Japanese Kempei Tai secret police.[36]

USAMGIK effectively sustained much of the Japanese colonial administration, from laws and regulations to the Japanese bureaucrats to the collaborators who retained their material privileges and the officers who would command the armed forces.[37] As a result even in the 1980s government studies found that 90 percent of South Korean elites had ties to Japanese collaborationist families or individuals.[38] Military historian Alan Millet, former president of the Marine Corps officer association, described the officers of the new southern military as "veterans of Japanese

service and 'class enemies' of the North Korean Communists; they tended to be Christians, educated, and middle class."[39] On November 5, 1945 the USAMGIK decreed: "Any former officers, regardless of their background – Japanese Army, Manchurian, or Chinese – were to register so they could form the Korean Army."[40] The U.S. thus effectively reversed the decolonization program of the People's Republic.

The American OSS selected Syngman Rhee, a strongly pro-Western, devout Christian and staunchly anti-communist Korean dissident who had resided in the United States for twenty-five years, as the first president of the new American-established Korean government. He was soon dropped in Seoul on General MacArthur's personal plane. Rhee was previously impeached by the Provisional Government of Korea for misuse of power,[41] and according to Korea hand U.S. Army Captain Jick Park "was despotic, stubborn, and self-complacent. In a sense he might be called a stupid fool who would never listen to any true advice and never look into a newspaper to see the life of the people either." Rhee's Liberal Party ruled "without regard to millions of unemployed and a low standards of living conditions of the people,"[42] with General Archer Lerch describing Rhee as "completely insane" and warning that U.S. forces may have "to lock him up in jail."[43] Warning of Rhee's "God complex," General Hodge highlighted his intolerance towards the Korean population including denouncing any opposition as communists,[44] while the State Department economic advisor Dr Arthur Bunce who had spent six years in Korea warned that leaving Rhee in power would make civil war inevitable.[45] The CIA's personality assessment described him as having "devoted his whole life" to

> *the ultimate objective of controlling that country [Korea]. In pursuing this end he has shown few scruples about the elements which he has been willing to utilize for his personal advancement, with the important exception that he has always refused to deal with communists... Rhee's vanity has made him highly susceptible to contrived flattery or self-seeking interests in the U.S. and Korea. His intellect is a shallow one, and his behaviour is often irrational and even childish.*[46]

Officials in Rhee's government had similar attitudes towards their population as USAMGIK officials, believing that they were "unfit for the responsibilities of government" and that "only those who have lived

abroad... can be counted upon to have the proper attitude."[47] Their rule was described as ineffective and corrupt even by their Western allies,[48] fuelling rebellion which escalated as Rhee and his officials increasingly took responsibility for governance in the stead of direct American rule. To counter growing opposition the U.S. directly sponsored extremist youth groups – often described by the Americans themselves as terrorists – which widely targeted Koreans suspected of improper loyalties. American scholar and later prominent CIA consultant Chalmers Johnson referred to one such group, the Northwest Youth League, as "a paramilitary vigilante organisation...whom the U.S. Army tolerated with full knowledge of their reputation for brutality."[49] The League, the Tai Han Youth Corps and the North West Young Men's Association, were the most prominent and were critical to the asserting USAMGIK and later the Rhee government's authority. The CIC described them as having "exercised police power more than the police itself and their cruel behaviour has invited the deep resentment of the inhabitants."[50] Beyond violence they gathered intelligence for the CIC and created target lists of those with political leanings considered unfavourable.[51]

USAMGIK was aware and tacitly approved of the methods of youth groups, many of which derived their authority from association and close co-operation with the CIC.[52] CIC commander Donald Nichols noted in reference to their conduct: "On many occasions, I had to accept the methods used during interrogation by our Allies... I had to maintain an air of detachment – even approval." He described some of these incidents in gruesome detail, noting that there were some he would "never be able to erase" from his memory due to the severity of the brutalities committed.[53] American historian and renowned Korea expert Bruce Cumings noted regarding the common conduct of the youth groups towards civilians suspected of leftist or nationalist sympathies: "In Hagui village, for example, right-wing youths captured a pregnant twenty-one-year-old woman named Mun, whose husband was allegedly an insurgent, dragged her from her home, and stabbed her thirteen times with spears, causing her to abort. She was left to die with her baby half-delivered. Other women were serially raped, often in front of villagers, and then blown up with a grenade in the vagina."[54] Professor Monica Kim, concluded in her own study: "These very brutal, very public

acts of violence were integral to the anti-Communist politics practiced and developed on the southern half of the Korean peninsula in the post-1945 era. In other words, the North West Young Men's Association's practice and mobilization of violence were a part of the everyday political landscape created under the USAMGIK-supported regime."[55]

By June 1950 the apparatus USAMGIK had established, including Rhee's forces and affiliated militarized youth groups, were estimated to have killed 100,000 civilians.[56] According a report published many decades later by the South Korean government-funded Truth and Reconciliation Commission, these figures were "highly conservative." Kim Dong Choon, a leading member of the government commission who investigated these killings for two years, estimated the death toll was at least half of the 300,000 South Koreans imprisoned in concentration camps.[57] South Korean reports from the early 2000s indicate a far higher death toll of between 600,000 and 1.2 million by the end of 1950.[58] *New York Times* correspondent Walter Sullivan wrote in early 1950 that large parts of southern Korea "are darkened today by a cloud of terror that is probably unparalleled in the world." The persistence of guerrillas "puzzles many Americans here," as does "the extreme brutality" of the conflict. He went on to argue that "there is a great divergence of wealth" in the country leaving even those previously relatively better off among the peasant population living "a marginal existence." Exactions from the peasants by both the government and the landlords was up to 70 percent of the annual crop, and Sullivan believed oppression and exploitation of the majority of the population was a primary cause of unrest.[59]

The most notorious single incident of rebellion was the 1948 insurrection on Cheju Island, which was sparked by massacres of political protestors at the hands of youth groups and the police force.[60] American public sources claimed 15,000–20,000 islanders were massacred in the thirteen-month clashes, with South Korea's official death toll standing at 27,719 while North Korea claimed over 30,000 islanders killed. South Korean scholarly sources later placed the death toll at 38,000, although according to declassified intelligence reports the military governor of Cheju had himself privately told American intelligence that 60,000 islanders had died and up to 40,000 had been forced to flee to Japan. 39,285 homes were demolished and, according

to the governor, "most of the houses on the hills" were gone. Only 170 of 400 villages remained, with up to a fifth of the population killed.[61] The U.S. reportedly arranged for former Imperial Japanese counterinsurgency forces to return to Korea from American-occupied Japan for operations against the Cheju islanders.[62] Scholar Hwang Su Kyoung referred to the "disciplining" actions against Cheju's population as "one of the most violent events in twentieth century Korean history."[63] Another prominent rebellion, the Daegu Uprising of September 1946, spread across southern Korea and demanded political and workers' rights which had been abolished with the end of the People's Republic. The U.S. Military deployed battle tanks and militant youth groups to put down the rebellion, staging mass arrests with participants facing severe torture. Homes and property of the protestors were permanently confiscated in many cases, leaving them destitute to deter future dissenters.[64]

Rhee's extreme unpopularity led to poor electoral performances, and in the 1948 presidential elections he won only by virtue of being the only candidate that was still alive when the votes were cast. His more popular rivals Kim Koo and Lyuh Woon Hyung were both killed by Rhee's forces, the former on his direct orders, although some sources claimed the CIA was responsible for Kim's death.[65] This paved the way to Rhee's government unilaterally declaring the Republic of Korea (ROK – otherwise South Korea) with the full authorization of USAMGIK on August 15, 1948, which claimed sovereignty over all Korea but ruled only the territory below the 38th parallel. Eyewitness testimony collected by the U.S. Military's psychological warfare shed light on how Rhee's apparatus sought to gain votes. One university student recalled: "The government mobilised youth groups at election places. If men refused to vote for the right people, they were beaten up... I saw goon squads all around with sticks at election time... [There] was an atmosphere of terror all around there." He added, regarding means of ensuring political control, that the "Rhee government put terrorists in the schools, not to study, but to keep surveillance on all other students... Anyone talking about politics was sure to be regarded as a communist." According to the psychological warfare section's report killing of politically suspect professors were among the means used, with accounts from other sources on the ground painting much the same picture.[66]

Two United Nations Commissions reported on the Rhee government's mishandling of elections and heavy reliance on threats to gain votes. Threats to confiscate rice ration cards on which much of the population relied to subsist was a milder form of coercion, according to UN observers.[67] The CIA had a similar view of Rhee's administration, reporting in 1950: "Syngman Rhee and his regime are unpopular among many if not the majority of non-communist Koreans."[68] Representatives who opposed constitutional amendments to increase the powers of Rhee's presidency were detained and charged with "communist connections" to ensure a favourable outcome.[69] During the Republic of Korea's first parliamentary elections, held two years after the presidential election on May 30, 1950, the results for Rhee's ruling Liberal Party proved disastrous with 128 of the 210 seats won by independents and Rhee's party retaining only twenty-two seats.[70] The fact that Rhee's administration used violence to intimidate its political opponents and gain votes, and had lost overwhelmingly regardless, was testament to the intensity of public disapproval. The failure of Rhee's party in the first parliamentary elections came just a month before the outbreak of the Korean War.

Outbreak of War in Korea

Where Korean nationalist aspirations were frustrated south of the 38th parallel, when the Soviet armed forces arrived in northern Korea on August 24, 1945 the ruling People's Committees were incorporated into the governing Provisional People's Committee (PPC).[i] While there was

i The PPC was organised at a meeting in February 1946 of 137 representatives, most of whom had comprised the leadership of the People's Republic of Korea, including two representatives each from the Democratic Party of Korea, the Independence Alliance, the Communist Party of Korea, the General Federation of Labour Unions, the General Federation of Peasant Unions and one each from the Women's League and the Democratic Youth League. ('Establishment of the Provisional People's Committee of North Korea,' *National Institute of Korean History*.)

widespread opposition to the Soviet trusteeship in the north, Moscow did not impose a military government, abolished rather than sustaining the Japanese imperial system with collaborators tried and their assets and privileges redistributed and removed, and allowed the Korean nationalist project to continue with minimal interference.[71] As prominent Korea expert, Colombia University Professor Charles Armstrong, concluded: "The Soviet occupation authorities in Eastern Europe were much more heavy-handed than their American counterparts; the opposite is true in Korea," highlighting that the USSR refrained from "manipulating of North Korea's internal affairs" in sharp contrast to USAMGIK.[72]

The governing People's Committees in northern Korea were neither established nor run under Soviet direction,[73] and had already began to organize governing institutions including a police force before the Soviets arrived.[74] As Kim Namsik, a South Korean scholar who witnessed this period in North Korea firsthand, observed regarding the independent nature of state formation north of the 38th parallel: "The People's Regime of North Korea was founded on the basis of the People's Committees spontaneously organised after liberation.... The People's Committees were not created from the centre but organised from the bottom up."[75] The lack of Soviet influence[76] became particularly evident in the 1950s, with overly "pro-Soviet" Koreans purged from government as part of an ideological and political break with Moscow,[77] while no similar break with the U.S. would ever have been possible in South Korea.

The leadership of the PPC, much like that of the People's Republic, had its roots in the anti-Japanese resistance, and its policies closely mirrored those of the republic as demonstrated by its 20-Point Platform for reform and decolonization which very closely resembled the republic's 27-Point Program. Its "Land to the Tiller" redistribution program affecting 710,000 peasant households, which boosted farm production in some provinces by as much as 50 percent, as well as instituting an eight-hour workday, guaranteeing equal rights for women, and nationalizing of Japanese owned industries, were among its most popular policies.[78] The PPC's chairman, Kim Il Sung, was the leader of an anti-Japanese guerrilla movement and the son of prominent Korean nationalists Kim Hyong Jik and Kang Pan Sok. He had years prior been elected as the leader of Korean guerrillas,[79]

and was already well known across the peninsula for his campaign against Japan which paved the way for his leadership of the post-colonial government. As Charles Armstrong observed, "at the time of liberation thirty-three-year-old Captain Kim Il Sung was the leading Korean among the Manchurian partisan exiles in the Soviet Far East. Kim's emergence as leader of the Korean group does not arise from his being the hand-picked choice of the Soviets for their occupation government, which was the assumption of many Western observers, both at the time and since."[80] This contrasted sharply to Syngman Rhee's own background as a little-known Washington-based exile with a European wife hand-picked by occupation forces, reflecting broader discrepancies between the two Korean states.[ii]

The result of the PPC's successful implementation of its policies was a considerable discrepancy in the quality of life north and south of the 38th parallel by 1948.[iii] Contesting the claim of the Rhee-headed Republic of Korea to sovereignty over the entire peninsula, a Democratic People's Republic of Korea was declared in the north on September 9, 1948, as a successor to the Provisional People's Committee and also claimed sovereignty over all of Korea. Thus two neighbouring states had overlapping claims over the Korean nation. According to reports from the CIA, while the North Korean state faced issues from labour shortages, by 1950 living standards had seen a very substantial increase.[81] Industrial output and state industry in 1949 were 340 percent and 420 percent of the levels in 1946 – a 20 percent increase over the Japanese imperial period.[82] In the

ii It was difficult to equate the two Korean governments in respect to their legitimacy because one represented a continuation of the union of people's committees Koreans had chosen and overwhelmingly supported before foreign intervention in the country, while the other was very clearly artificially imposed by a foreign empire leading to widespread resistance and civil war south of the 38th parallel. Although the government in southern Korea had a support base in the north as well as domestically, this was overwhelmingly comprised of devout Christians who identified with Rhee and of Japanese collaborators who relied on his and America's protection.

iii A notable example was that to raise revenues for the new state the PPC imposed a 25 percent agricultural tax, which although high paled in comparison to the reported 70 percent exactions in southern Korea from both the government and landlords. (Sullivan, Walter, *New York Times,* March 6, 1950.)

rural economy gross output of agricultural and animal products increased by 40 percent from 1944 to 1949 despite a wartime slump in 1945, while the average salaries of factory and office workers increased by 83 percent. The discrepancy in living standards favouring the DPRK thus grew fast as the ROK fell deeper into poverty and civil war.

In strong contrast to the rapid economic and social progress in the north, Rhee in his twelve years as president never instituted a national economic policy leaving South Korea among the very poorest countries in the world despite tremendous American aid. Although Seoul could rely on U.S. aid for one third its budget, much of these funds were diverted by officials for personal use.[83] As professors Uk Heo and Terrence Roehrig noted in their study of South Korean political history "Rhee also had little expertise or interest in economic development, and his economic ministers were similarly inexperienced and untrained in economic policy making."[84] *Time* thus referred to southern Korea under Rhee as "an economic wasteland... really one of the poorest places in the world."[85] A further result was the promotion and strong encouragement of prostitution servicing the U.S. Military,[86] a means for Seoul to earn much needed foreign currency which came to account for nearly 25 percent of Gross National Product.[87] This and the accompanying rise in human trafficking and sexual slavery was abhorred in Korean society, and further undermined the government's image.[88]

The considerable discrepancy in the achievements of the two Korean governments meant that it was widely expected that had nationwide reunifying elections been carried out, Rhee's government would have lost overwhelmingly. American sources, from the CIA[89] to the *New York Times,*[90] widely predicted this,[91] and that a subsequent government would closely resemble that in place in the north. The United States thus threatened a withdrawal of aid should a peaceful merger of the two Korean states take place with the passage of the Korean Aid Bill in February 1950.

Facing a declining electoral performance domestically, the Rhee government showed growing signs of an intention to invade and impose its rule on the north.[iv] The ROK strongly prioritized militarization which it

iv When on June 7, 1950 North Korean President Kim Il Sung called for nationwide elections to be held in August, and for a consultative conference in Haeju from June 15 to 17, this was strongly opposed by both Rhee and the United States. When four

could ill afford, enlarging the Republic of Korea Armed Forces (ROKAF) to 100,000 personnel in the summer of 1949 to outnumber the north's Korean People's Army (KPA). International observers consistently highlighted that Rhee and much of the ROK's military leadership were strongly inclined to initiate a conflict, with frequent provocations staged across the 38th parallel for this purpose.[92] William Mathews, a reporter accompanying prominent statesman and later Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to a meeting with Rhee, reported immediately afterwards that the president was "militantly for the unification of Korea. Openly says it must be brought about soon... Rhee pleads justice of going into North country. Thinks it could succeed in a few days...if he can do it with our help he will do it." Mathews further warned that Rhee was willing to invade even if "it brought on a general war."[93]

Several skirmishes broke out along the 38th parallel from May to December 1949 which, according to internal American accounts, were almost all initiated by the south. As the head of United States' Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG), General William L. Roberts, observed: "Almost every incident has been provoked by the South Korean security forces."[94] Roberts reported separately on the frequent ROKAF attacks on northern border villages that "each was in our opinion brought on by the presence of a small South Korean salient north of the parallel... The South Koreans wish to invade the North."[95] British sources reported just weeks before the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 that KMAG advisers had raised concerns that South Korea's "over-aggressive officers in command positions along the parallel" presented a significant risk that "a border incident...could precipitate civil war."[96] Other British intelligence sources concluded that the ROK leadership were willing to invade, with one stating that ROKAF commanders' heads "are full of ideas of recovering the North by conquest."[97] Prominent UN diplomat and expert from the United Nations Commission on Korea Egon Ranshofen-Wertheimer similarly

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days later the DPRK sent three delegates to the south in a peace overture to begin talks on reunification this was rejected outright by Rhee. (Gupta, Karunakar, 'How Did the Korean War Begin?,' *The China Quarterly*, no. 52, October December 1972 (p. 699).)

observed in September 1949: "The ROK might feel that its chances of absorbing the North are diminished from month to month in view of the growing strength of Kim Il Sung's armies... The temptation for Rhee to invade the North and the pressure exerted upon him to do so might, therefore, become irresistible. The top military authorities of the Republic... are exerting continual pressure upon Rhee to take the initiative and cross the parallel."[98] Thus as both short- and long-term power trajectories strongly favoured the north, the Rhee government would be the prime beneficiary if war broke out.[v]

Rhee was personally said to have "lobbied forcefully for U.S. backing for a military solution to the division of the peninsula," and himself indicated a KPA attack on the border could be used as a pretext to launch a full-scale invasion to forcefully topple the DPRK. In the event of a KPA border attack, Rhee said, U.S. support would be needed to "hurl them back, but also to attack their retreating forces and in so doing to liberate our enslaved fellow countrymen in the north."[99] ROKAF Brigadier General Kim Suk Won, a close confidant of Syngman Rhee and former Japanese Army officer who had played a leading role in Japan's invasion of Manchuria, led several unprovoked assaults on North Korea and was one of many to call for invasion. Kim told the United Nations Commission on Korea shortly before the outbreak of the war that the moment of major battles was "rapidly approaching."[100] When war did break out on June 25, 1950, it cemented Rhee's formerly waning power, provided a pretext for further massacres of

v Col. M. Preston Goodfellow, former deputy director of the OSS and a personal friend of Syngman Rhee, told the Chinese Guomindang ambassador that the momentum for attack had shifted, and the ambassador reported from their meeting: "It was the South Koreans anxious to go into N. K., because they were feeling sharp with their army of well-trained 100,000 strong. But U.S. Govt was most anxious to restrain any provocation by the S. K. and Goodfellow had gone there lately to do just that. I asked how great was the possibility or danger of war breaking out in Korea. Goodfellow said U.S. Govt. position is this: avoid any initiative on S. Korea's part in attacking N. K., but if N. K. should invade S. K. then S. K. should resist and march right into N. K....in such a case, the aggression came from N. K. and the American people would understand it." (Cumings, Bruce, *The Korean War: A History*, New York City, Modern Library, 2010 (p. 140).) (Wellington Koo Papers, Colombia University, box 217, Koo Diaries, entry for Jan. 4, 1950.)

hundreds of thousands of political prisoners to prevent them being freed by the KPA, and gained Rhee military support of the U.S. and its allies to impose his rule north of the 38th parallel.[101]

Neither the U.S. ambassador in Seoul nor international observers present could determine which party fired first when the Korean War began, although the ROK Office of Public Information reported a successful ROKAF attack on the border city of Haeju which the North Koreans confirmed but Seoul later retracted.[102] As shown in a detailed study by historian Karunakar Gupta at the University of London, subsequent ROK claims that their attack on Haeju had occurred much later were effectively impossible and an attack likely did occur as the war began.[103] Cables from the United Nations mission in Seoul confirmed that UN observers at the inter-Korean border were unable to determine which party had initiated hostilities. The UN commission reported that the ROK alleged they had been attacked and that Seoul denied the North Korean radio account that claimed the south had attacked first and that northern forces had repelled the invaders and then gone over on to launch a counteroffensive. No opinion was expressed as to which had started the war.[104]

South Korean Defence Minister Shin Sung Mo within hours went on air claiming the ROK Army was advancing, pledging: "Soon they will advance all the way to the Yalu River" – North Korea's northern border – "and realize our people's dream of national reunification."[105] This was not only for public consumption, with General Shin and Chief of Staff General Chae Byong Duk repeating this claim in meetings at the Defence Ministry.[106] The U.S. Military leadership, too, were convinced the South Koreans would quickly achieve victory.[107] Hostilities quickly escalated as North Korean forces, likely in response to ROKAF attacks, escalated with a major counterattack to capture Seoul. Considering how ready their forces were, it is likely that they had been prepared for some time to respond to future southern attacks with such escalation. As the KPA advanced they were widely greeted as liberators from the rule of the Americans and of Rhee, with CIA intelligence reports highlighting that even in the capital Seoul most of the student population actively worked with and welcomed the arrival of the North Koreans as a direct result of the abuses of USAMGIK and the Rhee government.[108]

The United States responded by deploying ground forces from Japan and by pressing the United Nations to intervene against North Korea. Protests by India and Yugoslavia at insufficient evidence of northern aggression, and Yugoslav proposals that representatives from both Koreas rather than just the ROK be allowed to make their cases at the Security Council, were ignored.[109] The UN at the time was an overwhelmingly Western-dominated organization, and at the Security Council the only permanent seat held by a non-Western member was Guomindang China which by then was an effective American protectorate ruling under 0.5 percent of Chinese territory. Security Council Resolution 84, which passed on July 7, established a UN military coalition under U.S. command to assist Washington's goals in Korea.[vi] U.S. President Eisenhower would later conclude that the UN coalition's purpose was to provide a better image to an American military intervention, stating: "The token forces supplied by other nations, as in Korea, would lend real moral standing to a venture that otherwise could be made to appear as a brutal example of imperialism."[110]

As fighting broke out the more numerous ROKAF quickly collapsed, with few proving willing to fight for the Rhee government and units defecting in tremendous numbers to the KPA.[111] Such mass defections were hardly unprecedented, and previously in a single incident in 1949 two whole ROKAF battalions and a warship had defected to the north. A year prior at Yosu on the south-western coast 2000 soldiers and much of the population staged a major armed rebellion, with their guerrilla activities ongoing when the war broke out.[112] Within a week UN forces Supreme Commander General Douglas MacArthur cabled Washington that only a quarter of ROKAF personnel could even be located.[113] Within a month only two divisions maintained their equipment while of the remainder, approximately 70 percent had lost or abandoned it.[114] The ROKAF's near collapse resembled that of the Chinese Guomindang forces five years prior

vi Many cables and documents in U.S. possession on the subject of the war's outbreak were denied as evidence to the Security Council. American military advisers serving alongside the South Korean forces on the border were notably not cited as sources to support the claim of unprovoked northern aggression. (Stone, I. F., *Hidden History of the Korean War*, Amazon Media, 2014 (Chapter 7: The Stage Was Set).)

during the Chinese Civil War and South Vietnamese forces two decades later – all armed and trained by the United States and retaining significant material advantages but crippled by corrupt leadership and poor morale.[115] As British journalist Philip Knightly was told by an American colonel, "South Koreans and North Koreans are identical. Why then do North Koreans fight like tigers and South Koreans run like sheep?"[116] This contrast was later primarily attributed by the head of the South Korean CIA Brigadier General Kim Hyong Uk, among many others, to the discrepancy in perceived legitimacy of their governments. The nature of the U.S.-installed Rhee government meant few were willing to die for it.[117] The remained the case well into the war, with American General Matthew Ridgway noting in 1951: "I drove out north of Seoul and into a dismaying spectacle. ROK soldiers by truckloads were streaming south, without orders, without arms, without leaders, in full retreat... They had thrown away their rifles and pistols and had abandoned all artillery, mortars, machine guns, every crew-serviced weapon."[118]

The United States Goes to War with North Korea

The U.S. Military was expected to quickly turn the tide of the war once deployed, but similarly struggled despite its tremendous material advantages. Pulitzer Prize winning American journalist David Halberstam noted: "Almost everyone, from top to bottom, seemed to share the view that the moment the North Koreans saw they were fighting Americans rather than the ROKs they would cut and run. It was arrogance born of racial prejudice."[119] Supreme Commander MacArthur, who had an intuitive approach to military intelligence mingling hard facts with the enemy's presumed racial qualities, had boasted to John Foster Dulles that if he only deployed U.S. 1st Cavalry to Korea: "Why, heavens, you'd see these fellows [KPA] scuttle up to the Manchurian border so quick, you would see no more of them."[120]

Within ten days of the war's outbreak the United States Military had seen its first major engagements with North Korean forces – the first

open battles in a conflict which would last over seventy years. The Battle of Osan saw the U.S. Army 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry regiment and supporting 52nd Field Artillery Battalion, surprised by the professionalism and training of the KPA and forced into a swift retreat. Casualties were heavy and positions were abandoned prematurely leaving considerable stashes of equipment behind alongside wounded soldiers.[121] The battle was over within three hours, and was the first of a string of defeats over more than two months which saw U.S. and allied forces pressed into a fast-contracting perimeter in the southeast corner of the Korean Peninsula. The U.S. Army 34th Infantry Regiment the following day deployed a force of 2000 men to face the KPA in the Battle of Pyongtek, with the Americans again taking heavy casualties and retreating.[122] When again sent north to face the North Koreans the 34th immediately became disorganized and retreated.[123] The Battle of Cheonan the following night again saw the 34th Infantry routed, taking heavy casualties and forced into a disorderly retreat while again abandoning considerable quantities of equipment and seeing many personnel taken prisoner.[124] As one British report stated regarding the performance of U.S. forces: "In their very first contact with the North Koreans they were outmanoeuvred and soundly defeated. Retreat was the only option" – a trend which changed little until September.[125]

On July 14 the KPA faced approximately 9000 U.S. personnel at the city of Taejon[vii] with some limited support from reorganized ROKAF units. U.S. forces succeeded in stalling the KPA in street battles which caused considerable damage to the city, but were forced to retreat within a week suffering 922 killed and 228 wounded. Almost 2,400 men were declared missing in action making a casualty number of over 3000 likely.[126] Commanding General William Dean was taken prisoner.

By the end of July the U.S. Military deployed superior cavalry regiments, although these too quickly fell into disorder. Within two days of

vii Although U.S. sources frequently blamed insufficient armaments for American defeats, Army regiments were equipped with the very latest weaponry. The 3.5 inch M20 'Super Bazooka' used extensively at the battle of Taejon, for example, had entered production in June 1950 just two weeks before the war began and was considered the most advanced munition of its kind in the world at the time. Some KPA units by contrast were using rifles over 30 years old.

engaging North Korean forces the 7th Cavalry had shot several of their own men by accident. "On the next (third) night, July the 25, elements were positioned on a hillside a few miles behind the front line. Rumours went around that the North Koreans had made a breakthrough causing mass panic. In the morning 119 cavalrymen were unaccounted for, along with many of the unit's heavy weapons."[127] As one cavalryman recalled: "Nobody knew what was going on. Matter of fact I didn't even know if we had a platoon leader, majority of the time. I didn't know if we had a platoon sergeant. There was nobody in charge."[128] As more U.S. and allied forces continued to pour in to Korea,[viii] by the end of July they and their allies deployed 92,000 men on the frontlines facing the KPA's 70,000.[129]

The U.S. Navy and Air Force supplemented this already vast advantage with uncontested sea control and air superiority, bringing in supplies from overseas, conducting surveillance and laying down very considerable firepower.[130] U.S. forces had effectively endless ammunition and were far from sparing in using it, where the North Koreans would have run out very quickly had they fired at the same rates. By July the KPA was losing more weapons from American air attacks on supply lines that it was on the frontlines.[131] Despite every material advantage U.S. forces continued to retreat, with their perimeter contracting throughout August until fighting stabilized at the Pusan Perimeter – a 130km by 80km right angled front in the south east of the peninsula. The vastness of the inflow of American reinforcements and their concentration at Pusan impeded further KPA advances, with engagements often occurring within range of the guns of U.S. warships which supplemented American carrier-based aircraft and bombers based in Japan. KPA firepower was limited to handheld weapons and a

viii General MacArthur increasingly came to terms with the fact that the U.S. Army was outmatched. At first he wanted an American regimental combat team in Korea, then two divisions. Within a week he cabled Washington that the KPA was "operating under excellent top-level guidance and had demonstrated superior command of strategic and tactical principles." By the beginning of July MacArthur wanted more than four infantry divisions, three tank battalions and assorted artillery. A week later he asked for eight whole divisions. (Princeton University, Dulles Papers, John Allison oral history, April 20, 1969.) (Cumings, Bruce, *The Korean War: A History*, New York, Modern Library, 2010 (pp. 14, 15).)

scattering of light artillery and tanks – less than that of a single American battleship and with no replenishment from abroad. The gargantuan 58,000 ton Iowa Class battleships – the heaviest and most powerful in the world at the time – on several occasions served as mobile artillery striking the KPA with massive firepower from well beyond retaliation range. It was a total mismatch of the greatest firepower in the world against a well-trained but relatively small and scantly armed ground force. Even the fire laid down from the sea, sky and from artillery assets, paired with the coalition's significant numerical, logistical and other armament advantages, was nevertheless insufficient to halt the North Korean advance at Pusan.

In late August the KPA made "startling gains" for two consecutive weeks, bringing the Pusan Perimeter "near breaking point." Further gains were made in September but gradually reversed. "After two weeks of the heaviest fighting of the war," military historian Roy Appleman observed, UN forces "had just barely turned back the great North Korean offensive." By September 15 U.S. forces, which were doing the bulk of the fighting, had alone suffered 20,000 casualties with tens of thousands more missing in action.[132]

North Korean forces' waning supplies and manpower, increasingly strained logistics, and lack of support from neighbouring China or the USSR, prevented a victory, with General MacArthur among others repeatedly stressing that had Beijing or Moscow backed the KPA at the time it would have proven decisive.[133] The U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute noted attributed the halting of the KPA advance to serious logistical issues which were a direct result of its lack of foreign support.[134] One consequence was that the KPA was forced to abandon its tanks due to a lack of fuel.

With close to half of global GDP, a population fifteen times that of North Korea, and growing support from across the Western world with British and Australian troops and warships already arriving, the U.S. and its coalition benefitted from tremendous material advantages which only grew as more assets were diverted to the front. So great was the challenge the KPA was seen to pose that all of United States Military's combat ready divisions, with the exception of the 82nd Airborne Division in Germany, would be deployed to Korea.[135] By late August the North Koreans were

outnumbered 179,300 to 98,000, and with over 500 of America's latest M26 tanks deployed at Pusan they outnumbered Korean armour more than 5:1.[136] The T-34 tanks the Soviets supplied the North Koreas were far from state of the art, although U.S. reports later conceded that had the USSR supplied its premium tanks such as the IS-2 to Korean forces they would have very comfortably outmatched anything in the American arsenal and seriously complicated operations.[137]

The KPA, as reported by the U.S Military, at times relied on obsolete "World War 1 rifles" and did not receive "any post-[Second World] war Soviet weapons."[138] Weapons shortages were extreme with not even enough rifles and pistols to arm all servicemen – let alone tanks or artillery.[139] The strong North Korean performance against overwhelming odds made a lasting impression, with U.S. Army General Matthew Ridgway, the commander of the Eighth Army and later Army Chief of Staff, observing: "We had never...imagined that the NKPA [same as KPA] was a force so well-trained, so superbly disciplined, so battle-ready."[140] Even Supreme Commander MacArthur warned of the dangers of underestimating the KPA, stating: "The North Korean soldier must not be underestimated. He is a tough opponent, well-led, and has combined the infiltration tactic of the Japanese with the tank tactics of the Russian of World War II. He is able to march and manoeuvre and to attack at night with cohesion... tank work is extremely efficient and skilful."[141] Generals and other officers widely voiced similar assessments.[142]

By late August North Korean numerical and material disadvantages were fast worsening by the day, but were still insufficient to turn the tide.[143] Only when General MacArthur personally oversaw an amphibious landing of 80,000 U.S. Marines behind KPA lines at the port city of Inchon from September 15-19 were was the KPA for the first time forced onto the defensive. The landing point was under 200km from Pyongyang – within a day's strike distance for American mechanized units – and over 300km from the frontlines at Pusan. Now overwhelmingly outnumbered, the KPA were forced to withdraw. Some pulled back north while others, such as the 10th Division, disappeared into South Korea's mountains and continued to harass U.S. forces for much of the war. The Marines took ten days to advance twenty miles against determined opposition to reach Seoul, and

when fighting to capture the capital frequently executed North Korean prisoners and looted Korean property across the city.[144] Similar conduct was seen weeks later when they captured the northern capital Pyongyang.[145]

The Inchon landings and subsequent recapture of Seoul could have marked an end to the conflict, with the KPA withdrawing north and U.S.-led coalition forces fulfilling their mandate to restore the Republic of Korea, returning Syngman Rhee and his associates to power and re-establishing the 38th parallel as the dividing line between the two Koreas. Supreme Commander MacArthur's decision to press northwards, however, would prolong the war by almost three years with the general intending to bring debellatio to the DPRK and impose the Rhee government's rule in its place. This forced withdrawing North Korean forces to regroup from mid-October and continue the fight against what had become an American-led invasion. President Harry Truman had previously stated that an advance into North Korea would be decided by the United Nations, although this position was later amended to allow MacArthur to himself decide. The invasion began before Truman or the Joint Chiefs of Staff had given authorization.[146] While MacArthur announced that the KPA had been destroyed, as U.S. forces pushed further into North Korea they began to encounter multiple reconstituted divisions. The speed with which the KPA regrouped into a fighting force astonished both the Americans and their allies north of the border in China.[147] Indeed, even when withdrawing fast, the KPA had taken few losses, with forces at Inchon described as having "disappeared like wraiths into the hills" when the U.S. Marines attempted to eliminate them.[148]

Key to ensuring the war's continuation were the terms of surrender offered by MacArthur, which pre-empted[ix] any possible United Nations negotiation of a settlement by unilaterally demanding Pyongyang's unconditional surrender.[149] U.S. ambassador to the UN Warren Austin had announced that "the Republic of Korea's jurisdiction would be extended over North Korea automatically" following the invasion with future

ix Such pre-emption with terms that were intended to be unacceptable was later again used by MacArthur to prevent peace breaking out with China, which the general stated was his exact intention to avoid giving Washington or the UN a chance to make concessions that contravened his own hard-line positions (see Chapter 3).

elections held under the Rhee government's authority.[150] Such terms were wholly inappropriate for the situation, and it was clear from the outset that Pyongyang would never accept them, ensuring that the campaign would continue. MacArthur later confirmed that his objective from the outset was not status quo ante bellum, but rather that the "mission was to clear out all North Korea, to unify it and to liberalise it."[151] Invasion and pursuit of "the complete destruction of North Korea" was widely supported across the political spectrum in Washington.[152] As American historian Alan Levine noted regarding the widespread support for an invasion: "Even those who cared nothing about Korea found handing the Communists a beating emotionally satisfying."[153]

Unconditional surrender would have facilitated an American occupation under a client dictatorship that had just massacred hundreds of thousands of its population[154] and had a vendetta against the ruling Korean Workers' Party, their families and their wide support base in the north.[155] President Rhee had made his intentions in occupying the north very clear, stating: "I can handle the Communists. The Reds can bury their guns and burn their uniforms, but we know how to find them. With bulldozers we will dig huge excavations and trenches, and fill them with Communists. Then cover them over. And they will be really underground."[156] This was far from mere rhetoric, and Rhee's forces had killed and buried suspected communists and dissenters and their families including children in mass graves in South Korea exactly as he described before the war as attested to by both Western sources and later ROK government investigations.[157] Western journalists who witnessed the scenes of mass executions by Rhee's forces compared them to the Nazi death camps of Belsen and Buchenwald.[158]

The U.S. 3rd Engineers Company witnessed one such an incident, with private Donald Lloyd recalling of ROKAF personnel: "We heard the machine-gun fire and saw them burying them in this big pit. There were women in that pit holding babies. I'd say one hundred people."[159] CIA Operative Colonel Donald Nichols detailed in his book the systematic slaughter of political prisoners in South Korea near Suwon, with several other observers reporting the same.[160] The South Korean government's Truth and Reconciliation Commission decades later proved using declassified records that the Rhee government with full American compliance

was responsible for extermination programs targeting suspected dissidents and their families, including large numbers of children.[161] Pak Chan Hyun, a South Korean lawmaker, found during an investigation in the 1960s that an estimated 10,000 had been executed in Pusan alone. U.S. Air Force intelligence officer Donald Nichols attested in his 1981 memoir to witnessing an "unforgettable massacre" of "approximately 1,800" at Suwon.[162] Even the U.S. Assistant State Secretary Dean Rusk referred to the killings as "atrocities."[163] Women in South Korea had been executed for acts as trivial as sewing underwear for the KPA when Seoul was under northern control,[164] and in the north where over ten percent of population were members of the ruling Workers' Party – over 1 million people – targeting of them, their families, the military and 'collaborators' was expected to result in a truly genocidal scale of slaughter. The first stages of this were observed when South Korean forces briefly gained control of large parts of North Korean territory from October 1950, placing the civilian population under the power of Rhee's forces which resulted in mass slaughter – what U.S. reports referred to as "communist hunting activity by ROK troops."[165]

The U.S. embassy military attaché shipped classified photographs of mass executions of political prisoners at Taejon to Washington in July, stressing that these orders "undoubtedly came from top level."[166] Rhee's forces showed "extreme cruelty" towards the prisoners before killing them, with cries after executions being heard for hours from mass piles of bodies as political prisoners were shot and left to die slowly, according to U.S. reports. These reports were passed on to Supreme Commander MacArthur, who had command of the ROKAF but took no measures to stop the killings.[167] The United States knowingly falsely attributed many of the mass graves and massacres to the North Koreans, publicizing footage of the remains as evidence of its enemy's war crimes most prominently in the Humphrey Bogart narrated film *The Crime of Korea*.[168] Later South Korean government investigations proved that the Rhee government was in fact the perpetrator, with victims numbering in the hundreds of thousands in the few weeks following the outbreak of the Korean War alone.[169] With such a government set to be imposed on them should they surrender, the North Koreans had little to lose form fighting to the end. In the eyes of the North Korean leadership unconditional surrender could mean absolutely

anything – including the sexual enslavement of the Korean women,[170] organized mass exterminations of hundreds of thousands or more,[171] and an indefinite Western military occupation[172] – exactly what happened under the Rhee government in the south. It would mean an industrialized and fast modernizing country falling under the administration of a government which had left its people destitute.

The first U.S. forces, paratroopers from Tachikawa Airbase in Japan, crossed into North Korea on September 26, with a full-scale invasion facing relatively little resistance as the KPA withdrew north to near the Yalu river separating Korea from China. As U.S.-led coalition forces pursued they came within firing range of the Sino-Korean border and attacked Chinese People's Volunteer Army (PVA) forces protecting the country's shared border infrastructure on the river. These attacks were staged multiple times despite multiple warnings from Beijing, resulting in a Chinese entry into the war (see Chapter 3). Facing overwhelming defeats and very heavy casualties near the Sino-Korean border, U.S. forces were forced into a retreat and by December 25 the Chinese and North Koreans had reached the 38th parallel. Strained logistics, however, prevented the two East Asian allies from pressing further south particularly as supplies were consistently attacked under American-controlled skies.[173] As General MacArthur observed Chinese supply lines could support 1 million troops at the Sino-Korean border, 600,000 at Pyongyang, but only 300,000 at the 38th parallel and just 200,000 by the time they reached forty miles south of Seoul leaving them impossibly outnumbered by U.S.-led forces.[174] Chinese military leaders reached similar conclusions themselves, and this was a primary factor ensuring that hostilities would remain localized near the 38th parallel. The situation on the frontline quickly developed into a rapid series of offensives and counteroffensives with few major changes in the lines of battle.[175] (See Chapter 3).

Bombing Korea

The United States Military faced a series of surprising defeats both in the Korean War's first three months against the KPA, and subsequently on North Korean soil where Chinese forces similarly proved far more potent than expected forcing a long retreat and inflicting tens of thousands of casualties (see Chapter 3). Compensating for the often lacking performance of its ground forces, the U.S. Air Force and Navy were relied on heavily both to provide support to personnel in the field and to launch intensive bombardments of civilian population centres across the Korean peninsula.

Bombing began on June 29, 1950, four days after the war's outbreak, and the air campaign frequently targeted civilians including repeated strafing and bombing of South Korean refugee columns.[176] On July 25 for example the U.S. Fifth Air Force Advanced Headquarters reported: "The army has requested[x] that we strafe all civilian parties that are approaching our positions. To date we have complied with the army request."[177] U.S. Congressman and Pentagon advisor Pete McCloskey later confirmed American pilots "did have orders to strafe 'people in white' [a term for South Korean civilians] approaching their position. At the *Valley Forge* carrier they unearthed a log that the Navy pilots were told to shoot any group of eight or ten civilians approaching the army position. I don't think there is any question that the strafing occurred – under orders." He noted that Air Force pilots had received similar orders.[178] When targeting North Korean forces directly, including those south of the 38th parallel, strikes did not distinguish between KPA combatants and southern civilians. A prominent example was the bombing of Seoul's Yongsan district on July

x Fifth Air Force operations chief Colonel Turner Rogers had previously recommended that the Army should shoot the refugees themselves rather than rely on the Air Force to do it for them. When the U.S. Army War College conducted a study on the lessons learned in Korea, it concluded regarding refugees: "Strafing fire from low-flying aircraft is very effective in clearing a road." (*The Bridge at No Gun Ri: A Hidden Nightmare from the Korean War*, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 2001 (pp. 176, 181).)

16 when under KPA control. The large majority of casualties were South Korean civilians, with 1,587 killed, but the operation was considered successful because it slowed the KPA's advance.[179] South Korean villages were at times bombed into complete destruction in the full knowledge that there were no KPA forces there, causing mass death among civilians, to guard against the possibility that their populations could provide rest and food to the advancing North Koreans.[180]

Tolerance for Korean civilian deaths, both southern and northern, remained extremely high with entire villages wiped out by napalm saturation and strafing if it was suspected even a small number of soldiers were present. This worsened from November 5 when Supreme Commander MacArthur initiated the strategic bombing of North Korea after the first signs of Chinese entry into the war,[181] ordering the bombing of "every means of communication, every installation, factory, city and village" in the country.[182] Assistant State Secretary Dean Rusk later elaborated that bombers would attack "everything that moved in North Korea, every brick standing on top of another."[183] As journalist Robert Jackson stated regarding the shift, "the B-29s were [now] to carry full loads of incendiaries and their task was to burn the selected cities from end to end."[184] Attacking population centres became a goal in and of itself regardless of whether they housed enemy personnel or contributed to the war effort.

Having been a correspondent in North Korea during the war, the anti-communist Hungarian writer Tibor Meray recalled years later after defecting to the West: "I saw destruction and horrible things committed by the American forces... Everything which moved in North Korea was a military target, peasants in the fields were machine gunned by pilots who, this was my impression, amused themselves to shoot the targets which moved." He witnessed "a complete devastation between the Yalu River and the capital [Pyongyang]." There were simply "no more cities in North Korea... my impression was that I am travelling on the moon, because there was only devastation.[185] Following his capture by North Korean forces Major General William Dean witnessed the following: "The town of Huichon amazed me. The city I'd seen before – two storied buildings, a prominent main street – wasn't there anymore." He encountered only "unoccupied shells" of town after town. Villages were reduced to rubble or "snowy open

spaces," nothing more remained.[186] Air Force General Curtis LeMay stated to much the same effect: "We burned down just about every city in North Korea and South Korea both... we killed off over a million civilian Koreans and drove several million more from their homes."[187]

Although strict censorship prevented him from reporting it, Associated Press correspondent Stan Swinton wrote in a letter to his parents on January 30, 1951: "The most horrifying part of this last advance has been the hundreds of refugees killed by our strafing. The children weren't hit; they just tumbled off their mothers' back and froze to death on the roadside... Do not the enemies we make among the civilian population counterbalance and more than counterbalance the damage we do to the Reds?"[188] American aircraft were known to target refugees with incendiaries without provocation killing hundreds at a time, and reports of strafing civilians were common. South Korean civilians in areas held by the KPA adapted to hiding in the daytime and cultivating their rice fields only at night, as American aircraft frequently gunned farmers down in their fields on both sides of the 38th parallel. South Korean civilians recalled after the war ended that North Korean soldiers had warned them not to go out in the daytime and advised them how best to avoid being targeted by American aircraft.[189]

Bombing population centres "from end to end"[190] with incendiaries and targeting "every brick standing on top of another"[191] meant that the vast majority of targets were not part of the military or of military industries.[192] By late 1950 the U.S. Air Force alone was dropping 800 tons of munitions on North Korea daily, much of it pure napalm,[193] with considerable further sorties flown by the Navy and by British, Australian and South African air units. Air Force communiques consistently showed mass indiscriminate targeting of population centres,[194] with 635,000–698,000 tons of bombs dropped on North Korea[195] compared to 503,000 tons dropped on the entire Japanese Empire during the Pacific War.[196] With the Japanese Empire being twenty-five times larger in land mass, North Korea was hit by more bombs over a shorter time period and concentrated on a much smaller area.

The Air Force saw napalm as a highly destructive "wonder weapon,"[197] although British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was among the vocal opponents of mass its use against civilian targets on moral grounds stating: "I do not like this napalm bombing at all. A fearful lot of people

must be burned, not by ordinary fire, but by the contents of the bomb... Napalm in the war was devised by us and used by fighting men in action... No one ever thought of splashing it all over the civilian population. I will take no share in the responsibility for this."[198] Churchill had shown no qualms about bombing population centres,[199] had declared himself "strongly in favour" of and personally ordered the use of chemical weapons,[200] and had personally approved the development of biological weapons for use against enemy population centres,[201] which indicated how terrible death by napalm was that he should oppose it. 32,557 tons of napalm were dropped on North Korea throughout the war.[202]

A report on the effects[xi] of napalm[xii] surfaced when American Private James Ransome Jr.'s unit was partially hit, with soldiers rolling in the snow in agony and begging to be shot as their skin burned to a crisp and peeled back "like fried potato chips." Reporters in Korea saw countless cases of civilians drenched in napalm – their whole bodies "covered with a hard, black crust sprinkled with yellow pus."[203] One napalm survivor interviewed stated regarding its effects: "Napalm is the most terrible pain you can imagine. Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius. Napalm generates temperatures of 800 to 1,200 degrees Celsius."[204] The incendiary stuck to human skin

xi Physician Richard Perry, having spent years treating its victims, would write years later regarding napalm's horrific effects on civilian targets: "*I have been an orthopaedic surgeon for a good number of years, with a rather wide range of medical experience. But nothing could have prepared me for my encounters with... women and children burned by napalm. It was shocking and sickening, even for a physician, to see and smell the blackened flesh. One continues for days afterward getting sick when he looks at a piece of meat on his plate because the odour of burning flesh lingers so long in the memory. And one never forgets the bewildered eyes of the silent, suffering, napalm-burned child. What could anyone possibly say to such a child?*" (Perry, Richard E. and Levin, Rebert J., 'Where the Innocent Die,' *Redbook*, January 1967 (p. 103).)

xii British war correspondent Alfred Winnington, who wrote from North Korea, reported of napalm: "Many people die horribly from the burns and shock, and still more survive as walking monstrosities sickened by their own images... the hands become drawn backward like claws of birds, the eyelids are pulled up and down, leaving bulbous eyeballs staring, apparently terrified, from wide red frames of the out-turned eyeball itself." He speculated that mass dousing of population centres with napalm was intended to produce "living corpses whose appearance will strike terror into others, and to break morale." (*Daily Worker*, July 26, 1952.)

and could be removed. Burns were severe and could be subdermal. When the *New York Times* had described the effects of napalm on Korean civilian population centres, State Secretary Acheson called for such "sensational reporting" to be censored.[205]

According to North Korean figures, the war destroyed 8,700 factories, 5,000 schools, 1,000 hospitals and 600,000 homes.[206] As the bombings escalated, the state newspaper *Rodong Sinmun* came to refer to 1951 as "the year of unbearable trials" for the Korean people. Entire factories, schools and hospitals were moved underground, and farmers were often forced to hide underground during the daytime and tend their crops only under cover of night. Agricultural output was reduced to bare subsistence levels as livestock was destroyed and shortages of everything from farm tools to fertilizers ensued. Industry and agriculture essentially ceased to function, bringing the people near famine.[207] To place a further strain on the country's food supplies, U.S. Navy SEAL units were tasked with destruction of North Korean fishing nets.[208] Fishing boats were also targeted by American aircraft.[209]

U.S. bombings succeeded in wiping out a significant percentage of the Korean population on a scale without precedent or equal in recent history, with the air campaign killing the majority of the 3–4 million North Koreans estimated to have died in the war.[210] Some estimates by Western scholars placed North Korea's wartime casualties near 30 percent of the population.[211] Air Force General Curtis LeMay said of the bombing of North Korea: "Over a period of three years or so we killed off – what – twenty percent of the population."[212] This figure did not account for the inevitable millions more wounded or maimed or the tremendous economic losses the country suffered. Even General LeMay's more conservative estimate would make the losses North Korea suffered relative to the size of its population greater than that suffered by any country during the Second World War, with a death toll extraordinarily high not only as a percentage of the population but as an absolute figure. Pyongyang was forced to file a complaint to the United Nations over the air attacks on civilians, although inevitably this had no impact.

While officially the purpose of firebombing population centres was to erode morale and thus end the war sooner, this had notably failed in

Japan, and would fail in Korea, but was repeated again and again failed in Vietnam. The bombings didn't win any wars, but they did succeed in erasing economic progress and imposing a terrible punishment against previously successful and modernizing East Asian nations which had resisted Western domination. With unexploded American ordinance continuing to endanger North Korean civilians, the cleanup operation is expected to last for over 100 years.[213]

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CHAPTER 7

The Desolation of Korea

> The fact that many Korean women in the villages were often raped in front of their husbands and parents has not been a secret among those who experienced the Korean War. It was known that several women were raped before being shot at No Gun Ri. Some eyewitnesses say that U.S. soldiers played with their lives like boys sadistically playing with flies.[1]
>
> – 1993 Report in the *Journal of Genocide Research* by Professor Kim Dong Choon of the South Korean government's Truth and Reconciliation Committee on the conduct of American military personnel

> If someone called attention to the ceaseless orgy, all the usual bromine pour forth to drown out the faint cries of peasant girls yanked off a train in Seoul and thrown into a brothel, a thousand little justifications for the abasement of a thousand little girls at American hands... the social construction of every Korea female as a potential object of pleasure for Americans. It is the most important aspect of the whole relationship and the primary memory of Korea for generations of young American men who have served there.[2]
>
> – Bruce Cumings

'As if All Koreans Were the Enemy': The U.S. Military in South Korea

Although North Korea's population suffered the brunt of the killings by U.S.-led coalition forces during the Korean War, the nature of American perceptions towards the Korean people as an Asiatic race, compounded by suspicions of widespread pro-DPRK and anti-U.S. sentiments among South Korea's population, also resulted in widespread killings of South Koreans. While the U.S. Military's very high tolerance for collateral

damage to South Korean civilians had devastating results, it also adopted an official policy of targeting South Korean civilians from the war's very early stages. Direct orders to target civilians resulted in massacres by American forces across South Korea, which was aside from the U.S. Military's complicity in the Rhee government's own killings of hundreds of thousands of South Korean political prisoners and their families which U.S. personnel often observed and photographed.[3]

The prevailing view that Koreans could not be trusted strongly influenced American conduct, and was partly due to the large number of South Korean personnel who either abandoned their positions or defected in the war's early stages, the warm welcome North Korean forces widely received[i] in South Korea[4] and the known unpopularity of the Rhee government.[5] According to the conservative London *Times*, in the countryside the North Koreans were viewed "as the leaders of agricultural and other reforms" which had long been demanded.[6] Villagers interviewed particularly emphasized the North Koreans' respect for local women, which bore a stark contrast to Western personnel who committed widespread rapes.[7] Indeed, even those hard-line anti-communist South Koreans who described the government in Pyongyang and its leader Kim Il Sung as "detestable" often saw DPRK rule as the lesser evil next to the "criminality" of the Rhee government.[8] Thus there was strong pretext on which to doubt the people's loyalty to the United States, Rhee and the order they represented.

Pentagon records show that orders were given to American units to massacre South Korean civilians from the war's earliest days, with refugees

i Award-winning Special Correspondent for the Associated Press Charles Hanley noted regarding the reasons for widespread South Korean support of the KPA: "Many [South] Koreans were simply disgusted with the corrupt, autocratic Rhee years. That opposition deepened with the bloodbath of executions carried out by the retreating government through the summer, when military police and other agents shot thousands of leftist political prisoners and dumped their bodies in mass graves outside Taejon and Taegu and elsewhere in the South." He noted that the restoring of people's committees, which had enjoyed widespread support until their forcible abolishment under U.S. military rule, as well as the promotion of women's organizations and redistribution of land, all served to make the KPA highly popular. (*The Bridge at No Gun Ri: A Hidden Nightmare from the Korean War*, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 2001 (pp. 195, 196).)

displaced by the scorched earth campaign and at times by American bombings being particularly prominent targets. Some of the orders given included: "shoot all refugees coming across the river," "refugees will be considered 'enemy' and dispersed by all available fire including artillery" and "all refugees are fair game" among others.[9] A letter from ambassador John Muccio to the State Department that emerged from archives in the 2000s confirmed that killing refugees was official policy.[10] This included orders for the Air Force and for naval aviation to strafe civilians, but most often was carried out by personnel on the ground.[11] Orders for air attacks on civilians continued well into the war.[12]

One of the most notorious massacres was perpetrated at the village of No Gun Ri, with reports from the U.S. Military and interviews with American servicemen and South Korean survivors providing key insight into the killings. Survivor Suh Jong Gap recalled in an interview: "The Americans forced us out of our village. We didn't know anything, so we just followed them because they said they would take us to safety." They were forced into a cluster on a railway line overlooked by the 7th Cavalry's main positions, with American personnel working "to make sure that we couldn't move at all." Suh recalled "Just after 1 o'clock I could see a reconnaissance plane circling above us. Then the Americans seemed to talk to each other on the radio." American planes appeared overhead, "and then they dropped bombs on the contained group of people." Survivor Cho Soo Jaoc recalled of the same event: "I crawled out from under my mother and climbed on top of her. I shouted "mum, mum" but she was dead. When I stroked her head with my hand, I found my hand sliding inside. I didn't know what hit my mother, but the back of her head was blown off."[13]

One South Korean survivor, Yang Hae Chan, recalled when interviewed: "American soldiers broke into our house with rifles and bayonets," forcing them to leave and later firing on and bombing them along with the families of Suh and Cho. Chan then recalled: "After the strafing and bombing everything went quiet. Then I saw the American soldiers reappear. They started checking through the dead and the living, poking the bodies lying on the railway line with their bayonets. Those who were still alive were forced to get up at gunpoint. The Americans herded us further down the railroad tracks, so those of us who survived the bombing were

made to move on again." Survivors were herded on towards No Gun Ri and exterminated by small arms fire.[14]

Joe Jackman from the 7th Cavalry 2nd Battalion recalled being ordered at No Gun Ri to "'kill them all.' Then of course there was a lieutenant who was screaming like a mad man 'fire on everything, kill them all'... There was a hell of a lot of fire going. Hell of a lot of shooting. A hell of a lot of shooting. Because I know the infantrymen, the infantrymen, we used to carry 10–15 bandoliers of ammunition, and even help machine gunners carrying ammunition. There was a hell of a lot of expenditure of ammunition." Regarding the nature of the targets, Jackman recalled: "Kids, there was kids out there. It didn't matter what it was. 8 to 80, blind, crippled or crazy they [U.S. personnel] shot them. It just seemed like all Koreans were the enemy."[15] Serviceman Delos Flint described the targets as "civilians just trying to hide."[16] George Early of the 7th Cavalry's heavy mortar company recalled being given the order to massacre Korean refugees: "A lot of refugees came down the road in a group. It was 50–60–70 people. So I ran up the road there by the railroad tracks to Captain Johnson and told him. He said go down, take the machine gun, shoot those people and we'll pull out."[17]

Hundreds of civilians ran into railway tunnels seeking shelter, where they remained under fire for three days. Yang Hae Chan recalled: "People piled up the dead like a barricade and hid behind the bodies as a shield against the bullets... I can still see bodies writhing in agony."[18] Another survivor recalled a father drowning his baby in a pool of water, as American soldiers were firing into the tunnel every time he cried.[19] Koreans who strayed outside the tunnel to collect food or drink stream water were shot. One survivor, Koo Hun, recalled: "It looked like the Americans were shooting us out of boredom."[20] George Early of the 7th Cavalry's recalled: "Everybody just ceased moving. No one was moving over there. They either were dead or so seriously wounded they couldn't move, or if there were alive they weren't moving. Because if they move they know they're gonna be fired at some more."[21] He later recalled: "I remember seeing this woman on her hands and knees. She was crawling. You could just see the bullets bouncing... bouncing around her. She kept crawling, crawling. And finally I guess she was just hit. And that was it." Buddy Wenzel, also from the 7th Cavalry,

recalled: "Word came through the line, open fire on them [civilians]. They were running toward us and we opened fire... We understood that we were fighting for these people, but we had orders to fire on them and we did."[22] Journalists accompanying North Korean forces, who arrived at No Gun Ri in the wake of the American retreat, reported finding "indescribably gruesome scenes." North Korean journalist Chun Wook reported: "Shrubs and weeds in the area and a creek running through the tunnels were drenched in blood and the area was covered with two or three layers of bodies. About 400 bodies of old and young people and children covered the scene so that it was difficult to walk around without stepping on corpses."[23]

When an investigation was launched into the killings in the 1990s, special correspondent Charles Hanley recalled that the Pentagon "suppressed vital documents and testimony, as it strove to exonerate itself of culpability and liability" – highlighting "glaring irregularities" in the official narrative the Pentagon put forward.[24] The emergence of further evidence of orders to kill refugees in the early 2000s led then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to cable the U.S. embassy in Seoul, clarifying that the South Koreans would not be offered an explanation, as it was vital to avoid setting a precedent under which victims of American massacres across Korea and all East Asia could seek to publicize their claims.[25] The No Gun Ri massacre was far from unique, but gained unique publicity because a professional and well-publicized investigation addressed it forty years later. Much like My Lai in the Vietnam War (see Chapter 8), the single most well-known massacre was remarkable only because it happened to be investigated and its details publicized – not because such occurrences[ii] were not commonplace.[26] The massacre was not done on the initiative of 7th Cavalry personnel, but

ii Criticism of the U.S. Military was strictly forbidden in South Korea for decades which prevented survivors from telling their stories. As one No Gun Ri survivor, Eun Yong, recalled: "We couldn't say publicly that the Americans committed such things during the war. The United States was such a powerful country. Speaking against the Americans was tantamount to calling yourself a communist" – with suspected communists and their families known to be disappeared. (*The Bridge at No Gun Ri: A Hidden Nightmare from the Korean War*, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 2001 (p. 246).)

rather was ordered by command with similar orders given to units across the country as part of a general policy.

Another prominent massacre took place at the Naktong River a week after the slaughter at No Gun Ri. The U.S. 1st Cavalry had just retreated across the river by bridge, which General Hobart Gay ordered demolished with hundreds of refugees still on it. Advancing North Korean forces would not reach the river for another four days, and the decision to kill the refugees was thus in no way prompted by urgency. A second bridge elsewhere on the front was also blown up on the same day by the 14th Combat Engineers as refugees were running across it.[27] Cut off with the bridges blown, civilians waded across the river. A survivor, Kim Jin Suk, recalled: "When we were half way across the river, what looked like American soldiers began shooting at us. First my father, who was in front, was shot. Then my brother was hit. I hid behind our cow, holding its tail. As the shooting became heavier, I saw piles of dead bodies floating down the river like straw."[28] Kim later identified that they were American soldiers which had fired on him, and he recalled that his father and many others died soon afterwards. Private Leon L. Denis reported of those targeted: "They were average folks, ladies, children and old men, carrying their baggage on their heads."[29] Survivor Cho Koon Ja recalled U.S. troops firing on civilians crossing the river and the resulting carnage. Cho survived and fled to her hometown, No Gun Ri, where a more terrible sight awaited her.[30]

Melvin Durham from F Company recalled: "We was holding that railroad bridge to keep them from coming across that. But those people – there was women, children, old people – we had to eliminate them... Our orders was to start opening fire and when we did, there wasn't nothing standing but a couple of cows. We fired for about an hour, an hour and a half."[31] The 8th Cavalry too were ordered by their commander, Colonel Raymond Palmer, on August 9, to "shoot all refugees coming across the river." These stranded Koreans carried with them a sign stating "Americans, We Are Not Communists," unaware that U.S. commanders were under no such impressions and knowingly gave the orders to target ordinary civilians. All Korean people in the area were targets, and American P-51 fighters proceeded to strafe the refugees on the far side of the river – even those who did not attempt to cross.[32]

As U.S. forces burned down their homes, South Koreans were targeted even in their places of hiding. On August 11, 1950, refugees sheltering in a Confucian shrine were massacred by the 25th Infantry Division. A few days later thousands of took refuge on a sheltered beach where they remained for days, escaping the U.S. Army but in full view of the Navy's ships off the coast. In the morning hours of September 1 the Navy opened fire without warning, and despite no North Korean forces being nearby. The U.S. Navy was found in a South Korean government investigation forty years later to have knowingly targeted refugees sheltering on the shoreline.[33] Survivors recalled the gruesome spectacle of the massacre.[34]

Observers on the ground widely attested to the massacres of South Korean civilians by U.S. Forces. British writer Elizabeth Comber, who accompanied American forces in the early stages of the war, wrote on July 14, 1950 regarding U.S. conduct: "They think every Korean is an enemy, firing at, and sometimes killing refugees." Two weeks later she wrote: "Day after day with their aircraft the Americans are laying waste towns and cities, killing fifty civilians for every one soldier."[35] Observers sent by the International Association of Democratic Lawyers found that civilians "clearly distinguishable as refugees, whole families including women and children" were "systematically exterminated... refugees were deliberately exterminated in their thousands by American forces."[36] *New York Times* correspondent Charles Grutzner reported "the slaughter of hundreds of South Korean civilians, women as well as men, by some U.S. troops and police of the Republic [ROK]."[37] The American Newark *Star-Ledger* in July 1950 reported: "It's not the time to be a Korean, for the Yankees are shooting them all." This was corroborated by several other Western sources.[38]

The prevailing American attitude towards the South Korean population could be effectively summarized by a quote from the lauded fighter pilot Ensign David Tatum. "I figured if we had to kill ten civilians to kill one soldier who might later shoot at us, we were justified," he said, with this published in *Time* magazine on January 1, 1951. That edition granted the American Fighting Man the man of the year award for their conduct in Korea, with stories from such supposedly exemplary personnel published. As U.S. serviceman Joe Jackman said, summarizing prevailing conduct towards the population as a result of deeply entrenched attitudes: "It just

seemed like all Koreans were the enemy."[39] Journalists with U.S. units told of the troops' growing hatred for the "gooks,"[40] with commander of the 1st Cavalry Division Major General Hobart Gay referring to South Korean refugees as "trash" that "clutter up the roads."[41] Even South Korean soldiers were "repelled by the racism they see and hear every day," and by the rapacious nature of U.S. forces towards Korean women.[42] As the London *Times* noted: "The U.S. Army is falling back before the onslaught, and the retreating army is venting its frustrations, fears, and hate in a deadly way, on any and all Koreans. Troops do not know who are their friends and enemies, and increasingly regard all as enemies."[43]

When South Korean forces began a second wave of massacres after recapturing territory from the KPA from September 1950, targeting those civilians suspected of supporting the North Koreans, U.S. forces provided support. After Seoul was handed over to Rhee government forces, *Time* magazine reported: "Since the liberation of Seoul last December, South Korean firing squads have been busy liquidating 'enemies of the state'... With savage indifference, the military executioners shoot men, women, and children."[44] Similar massacres were reported across the country. In Seoul several hundred politically suspect Korean women held in a warehouse by U.S. forces where they were serially raped.[45]

After being forced into a second long retreat by Chinese intervention in November, racial resentment towards East Asians grew among American personnel with repercussions for treatment of South Korean civilians. British Korea expert professor Callum MacDonald, for one, observed that following the routing of the U.S. Eighth Army American soldiers engaged in "looting, rape and assaults on civilians. The 'gooks' were resented and blamed for the rout beyond the Chongchon." This combined with the policy of burning houses, killing livestock and destroying rice supplies in retreat represented a reign of terror which left South Korean civilians in the Army's path desperate and often destitute.[46] Officers on the frontlines recalled receiving orders to "to fire directly upon groups of old men, women and children."[47]

Beyond direct killings, U.S. Army enacted an extreme scorched earth policy against South Korean population centres, destroying the homes, crops, livestock and other properties in which many families had lived

for generations to deny them to the advancing North Koreans. Upon taking command of the Eighth Army in December 1950 General Matthew Ridgway referred to this as "destruction for destruction's sake."[48] As later affirmed by General Curtis LeMay, "we burned down just about every city in North Korea and South Korea *both*."[49] "Food – whatever the hell – they left nothing," F Company serviceman Ralph Bernotas recalled, with this continuing into the winter leaving Koreans destitute without food or shelter to face the harsh subfreezing climate.[50]

Taking the South Korean city of Yongdong as an example, an Associated Press reporter observed that after the U.S. Military burned it down it "no longer exists as a city. It looks like Nagasaki after the atom bomb... Yongdong has probably been here for 4,000 years – and never known such silence."[51] The United Press similarly reported of the U.S. Army 2nd Division's destruction of the South Korean city of Wonju: "Before the retreat, every house in Wonju was set afire, every bridge demolished, every morsel of food destroyed. Patrols were sent into the countryside to set fire to huts and haystacks... Then the artillery and aviation entered the picture." The London *Times* reported on the same incident that on January 15 alone, twenty-two villages and 300 haystacks were burned.[52]

Although the Chinese and North Koreans were described as "an army of barbarians" and the "most primitive of peoples" by the *New York Times*' esteemed military editor Hanson Baldwin, with similar appraisals widely made in the U.S., their conduct proved exemplary compared to that of their Western adversaries.[53] As highlighted by the London *Times* among others, the DPRK leadership rejected a scorched earth program and refrained on principle from burning or destroying South Korean housing, crops or food supplies while retreating even though this allowed U.S.-led coalition forces to access valuable supplies. A *New York Times* correspondent noted regarding this stark contrast: "When the Koreans saw that the Communists had left their homes and schools standing in retreat while the United Nations troops, fighting with much more destructive tools, left only blackened spots where towns once stood, the Communists even in retreat chalked up moral victories."[54] The London *Times*' report came to much the same conclusion.[55]

Chinese personnel were strictly forbidden from destruction of Korean property, with orders given by Chairman Mao Zedong to "cherish every hill, every river, every tree and every blade of grass in Korea and take not a single needle or a single thread from the Korean people, just the way we feel about our own country and treat our own people."[56] Just as the PLA's good conduct towards civilians had gained it mass support during the Chinese Civil War, so too was this prioritized in the Korean theatre.[57] *New York Times* reporter George Barrett highlighted the stark contrast between the Korean population's perception of Chinese forces compared to those of Western powers as a result. He wrote that widespread rapes by U.S. and Canadian forces "have created a deep animosity among large sections of the Korean populace," with Koreans seeing that Western soldiers could commit such crimes with impunity. By contrast, Barrett noted, Chinese forces "have impressed many Koreans with the discipline of their troops. Many residents of Seoul seem to go out of their way to tell about the good Chinese behaviour, and especially about executions of two rapists the Chinese are said to have held."[58] Koreans on both sides were generally impressed with Chinese conduct and their high level of discipline.[59]

A key difference between Chinese and Western forces in Korea was that there was no institutional bigotry towards the Korean people among the former, while racial contempt towards East Asian peoples was prevalent at the highest levels of the U.S. Military allowing its personnel to brutalize those under their power. The war was consistently portrayed in Western reporting as a struggle for Western civilization against an Asiatic menace – much like the war with Japan the previous decade – with wide ranging reports from American missionaries to the *New York Times* to General MacArthur himself all portraying the Koreans as fanatical, drone-like, barbaric and above all as racial and civilizational inferiors.[60] Like in Japan, and later in Vietnam, brutal war crimes directly resulted from these perceptions as populations were vilified on racial and cultural grounds. Not only did Chinese forces conduct themselves better, but they left North Korea five years after hostilities concluded without ever returning with Beijing exerting only a very limited influence over Pyongyang's internal policies.[61] The U.S. by contrast maintained tens of thousands of personnel in South Korea indefinitely, an extensive influence over domestic and foreign policy,

and even wartime operational command over its armed forces.[62] The distinction between the way the intervening powers treated the two Koreas, one as an ally and equal partner and the other as a lesser client state, was thus clear both during and after the war.

The United States Military in North Korea

By the time U.S. forces entered North Korea in September 1950, massacres of supposedly allied South Korean civilians had been ongoing for almost three months giving an indication of worse things to come for the population of the north. The fact that North Korea's scantly armed and badly outnumbered "peasant army" had forced the Americans into almost three months of retreat resulted in a strong element of retribution towards the DPRK and its population influencing U.S. conduct when the first North Korean population centres were placed under the power of the U.S. Military. The ensuing atrocities during the brief American military occupation north of the 38th parallel would have few parallels in modern history. Multiple sources consistently pointed to widespread rapes and extreme sexual violence by U.S. forces, brutalization of the general population, and destruction and deliberate targeting of Korean cultural and religious heritage. While the large majority of primary sources on the events that took place in northern Korea are from the Chinese People's Volunteer Army and the North Koreans themselves, there were both foreign journalists and non-aligned international commissions which could more impartially give an account of American and coalition conduct.

The Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) founded in Paris in 1945, a consultant to the United Nations Economic and Social Council and considered the most influential women's organization of the post-war era,[63] sent a commission to Korea during the war. Its report after observing the conduct of U.S.-led forces in North Korea from October 1950 found: "In the period of occupation, hundreds of thousands of civilians, entire families, from old men to little children, have been tortured, beaten to death, burned and buried alive. Thousands of others have perished

from hunger and cold in overcrowded prisons in which they were thrown without charges being levelled against them, without investigation, trial or sentence." Its conclusion was extreme, stating: "These mass tortures and mass murders surpass the crimes committed by Hitler's Nazis[iii] in temporarily occupied Europe."[64]

The WIDF commission reported that brutal sexual crimes had been widely committed by U.S. and other coalition forces, and that in Pyongyang: "The Americans made the Opera and the remains of the adjoining house into an Army-brothel. To this brothel they took by force women and young girls caught in the streets. As she [a young girl interviewed] feared a similar fate, she didn't leave her dug-out for 40 days." The report continued:

> *The husband of her friend, Ri San Sen, was beaten up by Americans because he hid his wife from them. An inhabitant of Pyongyang...confirmed this statement. Many other residents of Pyongyang recounted the atrocities by Americans. Kim Sun Ok, 37, the mother of four children [who had been] killed by a bomb, stated that she was evacuated in the village by the Americans, among them the secretary of the local women's organization. The Americans led her naked through the streets and later killed her by pushing a red-hot iron bar into her vagina. Her small son was buried alive.*

Similar punishments were frequently given to women who resisted rape. In Mih Yen village three women who defended themselves against rape by American soldiers had their breasts cut off. Hot irons were thrust into their vaginas which killed them. This was reported by the commission, although

iii A notable indicator of how the Korean War was fought was that the war crimes committed by U.S. and South Korean forces were used by the defence of Nazi German war criminals to argue that German generals should have their sentences commuted since they were no worse. Supreme Commander Matthew Ridgeway, who after Korea served as Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, said he favoured pardons on the basis that he had himself given orders in Korea to commit crimes no worse than those the Nazi generals had. This may well have included his commands to massacre refugees, firebomb civilian population centres across both Koreas, and "kill everything in front of us, including women and children" during advances in 1951. (*New York Times*, February 24, 1952.) (Large, David Clay, *Germans to the Front: West German Rearmament in the Adenauer Era,* Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1996 (p. 117).)

it was not an exceptional case.[65] The commission's findings were later corroborated by North Korean government sources, which discovered sites mass graves of civilians killed by live burial as the commission's reports indicated was common, with photographic evidence presented affirming this.[66] Such reports were highly consistent with later reports by the South Korean government's own commission confirming very similar conduct by U.S. forces against Korean civilians south of the 38th parallel.[67]

The WIDF commission also reported the looting of cultural relics from the Pyongyang Museum and other sites by U.S. forces and intentional destruction of historical sites. It collected numerous testimonies from survivors, many showing injuries as evidence, of abuses by U.S. forces against civilians ranging from disfigurement of a woman's fingers after soldiers shoved hot needles under her nails to deep scars in an 11-year-old girl's head as a result of beatings.[68] Members of the ruling Korean Workers' Party and affiliated women's organizations were consistently shown to be singled out for particularly severe torture.[69] The chairman of the Wonsan women's organization, for one, aged 25 and pregnant, was arrested and beaten by American soldiers, exposed publicly in the town square, and killed when a rod was thrust into her womb with eyewitnesses present. Similar killings were widely reported and confirmed by the commission. Beatings, torture and mass rapes, including of women up to 64 years old and including killings by sexual violence, were reported across the country.[70]

Two journalists who did gain access to North Korean victims, Alan Winnington and Wilfred Burchett from Britain and Australia, gave accounts which corroborated those of the WIDF Commission's investigation. They reported from both sides of the war, and their testimonies were considered invaluable by Western media who otherwise had very restricted access to information due to wartime censorship.[71] Burchett was renowned by many major U.S. media outlets as a reliable source,[72] and would later consult White House National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger on the Vietnam War.[73]

Burchett and Winnington interviewed North Korean women captured by the U.S. Military. One woman, Kim Kyong Suk, gave the following account as several other women who had been detained with her sat at the interview, affirmed her story and corrected various dates and details.

Kim had been put into a prison for juveniles at Kaesong under the U.S. military occupation, then held with a large group of around 150 women at Inchon. She recalled:

> *The Americans treated us like animals from the day we were captured. On the pretext of searching us, they forced us to strip nude. They hurled insults at us. They paraded us naked in the streets with their bayonets prodding us along and almost bursting through our skin. They brought along photographers and took pictures which they later posted on our prison compound notice board. Americans would come with ROK troops and select girls for raping.*[74]

Kim recalled having been paraded naked through Seoul along with fifty other women in October 1950. She stated: "No one was safe from their bestialities. They even violated one 14-year-old girl whom they had rounded up as a 'prisoner of war.' At the Inchon camp, two mothers with babies on their backs were repeatedly dragged off at bayonet-point. The children had their mouths gagged while the mothers were taken into the American guards' quarters and raped." Kim reported that at least one young girl who had suffered from rape and torture lost her mind as a result of the psychological trauma.[75]

Winnington and Burchett observed evidence of the North Korean women's testimonies. Where they alleged they had suffered from torture, including nails being put under their fingernails, severe beatings or electric torture, they had the physical scars and burn marks to prove it. The two journalists compared U.S. forces' extreme racial bigotry to that which motivated Nazi German atrocities the previous decade, with the frustration of repeated military defeats by supposed racial inferiors only worsening the brutality of reprisals against peoples of these nations.[76] Winnington and Burchett's reporting proved reliable, and although their reports of atrocities committed by U.S. forces in South Korea were dismissed in America as "atrocity fabrication," they were proven entirely true when U.S. intelligence reports, photographic evidence and other documents were decades later declassified. On example was the description of the massacres of South Korean civilians and their burial in mass graves which was wholly dismissed at the time but later fully verified by official sources in the U.S.[77]

The International Association of Democratic Lawyers sent a commission to investigate war crimes in Korea which gave similar accounts regarding U.S. conduct.[iv] Its report concluded: "Taking the view that the extensive murders are not the result of individual excesses, but indicate a pattern of behaviour by the U.S. forces throughout the areas occupied by them... the Commission is of the opinion that the American forces are guilty of the crime of Genocide as defined by the [UN] Genocide Convention of 1948."[v] As the United States carried out massacres of civilians in both Koreas, in tandem with indiscriminate use of incendiaries against population centres and the destruction of dams and crops intended to cause starvation in the north, the Korean population itself appeared to be the war's target.

Allegations of genocide were made by a number of sources from several countries. Kim Dong Choon, professor at Song Kong Hoe University in Seoul and a leading member of the government's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, published his findings in an article for the Journal of Genocide Research in 2004. He concluded that the United States Military committed genocide during the Korean War, citing orders to commit indiscriminate and widespread massacres such as that at No Gun Ri, as evidence. He highlighted that successful vilification of North Korea had resulted in a scarcity of investigations into the matter, as it "served to justify any methods that the U.S. and South Korean army employed to oppose it." He concluded: "This is why existing books or articles dealing with massacres or genocides have

iv The Commission's report highlighted: "The Commission has confined itself to a statement of those facts which were proved by direct evidence which in the opinion of the Commission was corroborated and established beyond doubt. A considerable volume of written statements was submitted to the Commission, which have been taken into account only by way of corroboration of facts proved by primary evidence. We were invited to investigate many similar cases to those stated above in various parts of the country, and it was time alone that prevented this from being done." (*Report on U.S. Crimes in Korea*, Commission of International Association of Democratic Lawyers, March 31, 1952 (p. 21).)

v The convention defines genocide as acts committed "with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethical, racial or religious group." This would include "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part." This definition entered into force in 1951.

never included the cases of the Korean War. Except for a few Western scholars who dared to mention the misconduct of American soldiers and the brutality of the ROK army, only a small number of scholars or reporters have ever raised the issue of 'criminal' actions of the U.S. and ROK army." Anti-communism and a lack of respect for East Asian lives between them ensured that even genocide could be overlooked or even somewhat condoned in the war against a communist Asian power.[78]

Professor at Ottawa University Michel Chossudovsky similarly concluded that the United States had committed genocide in Korea under international law based on the extreme civilian death toll and the way population centres were targeted.[79] American Professor Patricia Hynes also concluded when analysing the conduct of the U.S. air campaign, the orders to "wipe out all life in tactical sites" when targeting population centres, and the intentional targeting of irrigation dams at the onset of rice growing season to starve the North Korean population, that U.S. actions amounted to genocide.[80] East Asian Studies Professor Bruce Cumings, an American holding South Korea's honourable Kim Dae Jung Academic Award for Outstanding Achievements and Scholarly Contributions to Democracy, Human Rights and Peace, reached the same conclusion. Citing the United Nations Genocide Convention, as well as the 1948 Red Cross Convention on the Protection of Civilians in Wartime, Cumings assessed that although both were fully in effect "neither measure had the slightest impact" on U.S. conduct. Through their actions in Korea, and the air campaign in particular, the United States had violated both and was guilty of genocide against the Korean people.[81]

The fact that the testimonies of North Korean survivors were so similar to those separately collected from South Korean survivors of similar massacres by the very same perpetrators, as well as the testimonies of U.S. personnel themselves, lent them considerable weight. In South Korea Gil Insham from the U.S. Army 7th Infantry Division recalled his sergeant organized patrols into villages for the sole purpose of raping Korean women, and once watched him pistol-whip a village elder for not leading him to young women and then rape the old man's wife in front of him. He recalled GIs tortured North Koreans in their power, poking the exposed brain of the wounded and laughing or tying them to trees and pulling them apart. "I

don't know why some of our people did things like that. Maybe they were just like that inside, sadistic," he recalled.[82] South Korean soldiers returned home to stories of their sisters and other family members being targeted for rapes by Western soldiers,[83] while Chinese soldiers recalled finding pictures of naked Korean rape victims in the helmets of dead American personnel alongside pictures from home.[84]

As Kim Dong Choon reported in 2004 on the conduct of American personnel towards South Korean civilians that atrocities were committed as a direct result of their "deep racial prejudices" towards the Korean people. It detailed:

> *With total ignorance of Asia, young soldiers regarded Koreans and Chinese as 'people without history.' They usually called Koreans 'gooks,' a term used during World War II for Pacific Islanders. The fact that many Korean women in the villages were often raped in front of their husbands and parents has not been a secret among those who experienced the Korean War. It was known that several women were raped before being shot at No Gun Ri. Some eyewitnesses say that U.S. soldiers played with their lives like boys sadistically playing with flies.* [85]

Alongside the U.S. other coalition members were also involved in widespread atrocities against Koreans on both sides of the 38th parallel. A study by University of Victoria Professor John Price, an expert on Canada's role in the Cold War, found that brutalities committed against the Korean population were "substantial and exceeded anything seen during the fighting in Europe and WWII." Canadian soldiers frequently killed and raped civilians, with Price alluding to a racial cause for the discrepancy with their much better prior conduct towards European civilians in the Second World War.[86] British personnel were also widely reported to have committed severe war crimes against civilians in northern Korea. Witnesses testified to the WIDF commission that U.S. and British forces had rounded up women for rape after taking control of villages, with brutalization in one case resulting in 240 of the 243 women taken dying.[87] Pak On In from Sa Ok village said her husband was arrested with his three brothers. All were peasants and non-combatants, but all were killed in custody. She said she saw a teenage girl raped and killed by both American and British soldiers in front of her, and later found her husband's body

severely mutilated by them. Song Chun Ok, a 42-year-old woman also interviewed by the WIDF commission, said all her family had been killed including her young children. American and British soldiers used axes and knives to do this. "It was not only the American soldiers who did these things. It was the English soldiers too," she recalled. Others widely attested to British forces behaving "like beasts," distinguishable from U.S. personnel only by their uniforms, which alongside massacres and rapes included beatings of civilians.[88]

According to West Point psychologist Dave Grossman, two critical factors which facilitated atrocities in war were "an intense belief in moral superiority" and racial factors which allowed an enemy to be dehumanized. These both strongly applied to the U.S. Military in Korea.[89] Atrocities were not endemic to the nature of war, as demonstrated by the conduct of Chinese forces in particular towards the Korean population, but rather to how the forces involved perceived the population relative to themselves – as inferiors and conquered subjects or as equals. Western military powers in East Asia consistently showed themselves to perceive local populations in the latter way particularly those in states outside the Western sphere of influence such as Imperial Japan, North Korea, China and North Vietnam. The atrocities in Korea were thus highly consistent with those which Japanese civilians were subjected to less than a decade prior, and those in Vietnam the following decade. Many years later reports from Western military interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Somalia, West Africa and other theatres showed conduct if anything had become more brutal still.[90]

Ending the War

Although real hopes for an armistice to end the Korean War after the Chinese intervention emerged as early as November 1950 (see Chapter 3), none was signed until July 1953 with the conflict taking a very significant toll on the Korean and Chinese economies and populations until then. In March 1951 calls among the U.S. military leadership were renewed for an offensive into North Korea to establish a new front – a

Pyongyang-Wonsan Line – which would place 85 percent of the Korean population and the majority its food supply under U.S.-led coalition control.[91] Initial gains by coalition forces were quickly reversed by an effective KPA and PVA counteroffensive, the Spring Offensive, which pushed the U.S. and their allies back to the 38th parallel. The Spring Offensive was the last major offensive by Chinese and North Korean forces for the remainder of the war, and they quickly pressed hard for a diplomatic solution while heavily fortifying their positions. Coalition efforts to breach these defences and again push north repeatedly ended in failure, and even nuclear attacks were considered insufficient to penetrate the new PVA and KPA emplacements built along the frontlines.[92] The impracticality of tactical applications of early nuclear weapons, and the fact that firebombing had very quickly destroyed all meaningful strategic targets in Korea, were primary factors preventing the U.S. from launching nuclear strikes.[93]

The extremely strained logistics of the KPA and PVA, and their inability to contest air superiority south of Pyongyang, made a push further south appear far from feasible. At the same time U.S.-led forces' inability to push north, and the high casualties sustained trying to reach the Pyongyang-Wonsan Line, drove home to American leaders that they too could not expect to make meaningful gains. This reality drove both sides to the negotiating table, with delegations meeting for the first time on July 10, 1951.

For the coming two years the U.S.' ability to cheaply impose tremendous costs on its adversaries provided a strong advantage in negotiations. Costs included destruction from the continued bombing of North Korea, with civilian death tolls averaging thousands daily,[94] as well as the war's unsustainable cost on the post–civil war Chinese economy which forced Beijing to allocate half of all spending to the armed forces in 1951.[95] Beijing and Pyongyang were thus forced to make multiple rounds of concessions unilaterally – first dropping demands for withdrawal of foreign forces from Korea, then demands for restoring the 38th parallel as the demarcation line, and subsequently ending demands for a ceasefire during negotiations which the U.S. opposed as it sought to sustain its bombardment.

With U.S.-led forces holding more territory north of the 38th parallel than the Chinese and North Koreans did south of it, American negotiators

demanded that the armistice would not see a return to the pre-war lines meaning net gains for South Korean territory. American historian James I. Matray noted that "motives for presenting a DMZ proposal certain to infuriate the other side included gaining bargaining leverage, humiliating his Communist adversary, and placating South Korea... [and to show] toughness in forcing the Communists to accept an armistice on American terms."[96] Plans by Eighth Army Commander James Van Fleet to apply further pressure to negotiations by advancing to the Pyongyang-Wonsan line proved unfeasible, however, with the Korean People's Army yielding ground only under massive air, napalm and artillery strikes and causing high American casualties which deterred further U.S. offensives.[97]

Demands for a restoration of the pre-war 38th parallel border were dropped on November 26,[98] to which American negotiators responded on the 27th with demands for guarantees that the Chinese and North Koreans would not rehabilitate airfields destroyed by Western bombing after the war's end among other significant further concessions. The Chinese and North Koreans gradually made further rounds of concessions, but negotiations would reach an impasse over the issue of prisoner repatriation.[99]

Prisoner exchanges began to be discussed in December 1951, with the Chinese and North Koreans proposing each side would repatriate all enemy prisoners in their custody in line with international law and the Geneva Conventions. The American position was revealed on January 2 when negotiators proposed terms that were, according to many in the U.S. military leadership themselves, predictably wholly unacceptable. Firstly, they stipulated that prisoners returned would be paroled and would be forbidden from fighting again. Secondly, and in direct violation of the Geneva Conventions, the Americans introduced an entirely unheard of concept of "voluntary repatriation" under which soldiers would be able to "exercise his individual option as to whether he will return to his own side or join the other side." In his argument, Admiral Ruthven Libby, the U.S. delegate, used phrases such as "principle of freedom of choice" and "the right of individual self-determination."[100] "As regards repatriation, it permits freedom of choice on the part of the individual, thus ensuring that there will be no forced repatriation against the will of the individual."[101]

America and its allies envisioned engineering a mass defection of enemy prisoners to portray the order they presided over as one with universal appeal to all peoples. With China and North Korea both being decolonizing states at the forefront of the conflict against the Western-led order at the time, this was key to the Western Bloc's claim to represent the interests of humanity, and to delegitimizing opposition to Western hegemony and legitimizing Western military interventionism. As professor of history at New York University and expert on the Korean War negotiation process Monica Kim stated to this effect:

> *The choice of the Korean War POW would be further evidence of the fundamental appeal of U.S. mandated projects of democracy on the global stage... The notion of defending humanity came to the fore as the moral impetus for war. Sovereign recognition, decolonizing imperatives, or state interests – including those of the United States – none of these elements were placed on the table regarding how the American public should imagine the U.S. military intervention abroad.*

Kim concluded: "Desire on the part of the decolonized Korean POW and the Chinese POW would enable the critical disavowal of imperial ambitions on which the United States insisted – if others demonstrated their wish to belong to the U.S.-defined liberal order, then the United States was not imposing an imperial design on the globe. Desire, however, was not a predictable variable in the interrogation room."[102] Ensuring that prisoners from the East Asian countries which resisted Western dominance would act in a way the ideology of the 'free world' would presuppose was thus essential. The American leadership, and in particular the White House and State Department, increasingly became fixated on the need for such a victory. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill also lent it his full support, although his Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden admitted "our legal grounds were so poor" for pursuing such action.[103] American policy was effectively settled by February 27 on an insistence on "voluntary repatriation," following a White House cabinet meeting in which President Truman had given his final assent.

Western rhetoric increasingly placed a new emphasis on moral universalism to reframe its interventionism overseas, and while a world order based on the dominance of Western military might ever-present across the

globe would remain as it had in the colonial era the pretext for this order and for Western military actions would change. The West's wars were now framed as humanity's wars fought on behalf of mankind, and those such as the Chinese and North Koreans who resisted the West were thus portrayed to be acting not only against Western interests – but against the interests of humanity, the "international community" and even their own people.[vi] The will of the "free world" and the "international community" and the designs of the West were to be indistinguishable. The first adoption of this rhetoric, and new justification for Western-dominated order and the quashing of independent anti-imperialist forces by Western might, came in Korea. CIA Director Allen Dulles was thus not overstating the importance of the issue when he referred to alleged mass defections as "one of the greatest psychological victories so far achieved by the free world against communism."[104]

The prisoner of war issue became so heated in light of the wholly unexpected and illegal new Western demands that the signing of the ceasefire was effectively delayed for eighteen months – with Western warplanes, artillery and warships all the while continuing to bombard North Korea. While American negotiators initially stated they only intended to keep a small portion of prisoners, in early April 1952 they offered to return just 70,000 prisoners down from a prior offer of approximately 116,000 which stunned Chinese and North Korean negotiators.[105] The remainder would go to South Korea and Taiwan. In light of the details which would later emerge regarding the conditions for Chinese and Korean prisoners in the enemy camps, and the extreme and torturous means of coercion used to

vi By redefining war as the imposition and protection of universal values under the pretexts of universal moralism, the world was effectively placed in a total struggle between the Western-led order and those communist states and non-aligned nations which remained outside it. Carl Schmitt, a prominent political theorist and former Nazi German jurist, observed at the time regarding the West's construction of universal moralism that it "would bring into existence – in fact allow only the existence of – wars on behalf of humanity, wars in which enemies would enjoy no protection, wars that would necessarily be total." (Schmitt, Carl, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum,* New York, Telos Press, 2003 (p. 419).)

force their defections and provide the West with the propaganda coup that Washington so coveted, the East Asian allies' decision to refuse Western terms despite the cost of extending the war was arguably vindicated.

Hugh Deane, American reporter and former Coordinator of Information and naval intelligence officer on General MacArthur's staff, reported on the importance of engineering defections to U.S. interests and how it was achieved:

> *Reduced estimates [from 116,000 to 70,000] reflected the results of savage coercion in the compounds. President Truman and an increasing number of others in the leadership had come to envisage a substitute for the victory the U.S. had failed to win on the battlefield – a propaganda triumph in line with the rollback doctrine that was prevailing over mere containment. An impressive number of prisoners were to refuse adamantly and publicly to go home to the communist evils awaiting them.*
>
> *To do the brunt of the dirty work in selected compounds (there were 32 of them on Koje, all overcrowded) the U.S. secured some 75 persuaders from Taiwan, mostly from Chiang Kaishek's equivalent of the Gestapo, and a larger number of members of terrorist youth groups sent in by the Syngman Rhee government. Some wore neat American uniforms, others were posing as prisoners... Their continuing task was to locate prisoners who wished repatriation and to do whatever was necessary to dissuade them. Control of the food supplies was a powerful means, and that, threats, beatings, slashings and the killing of the most stubborn, led to a gratifying number who muttered 'Taiwan, Taiwan, Taiwan' when asked the key question... Thus many Chinese who didn't want to go to Taiwan found themselves there. Of the Chinese prisoners 6,670 were repatriated to China, 14,235 were sent to Taiwan.*[106]

The Anti-Communist Youth League, one of the aforementioned extremist South Korean youth groups, maintained a strong presence in the prison camps. They were often given jurisdiction over meal distributions, disciplinary beatings, surveillance and interrogations, and reserved the right to execute prisoners.[107] Comparisons of prison camps where Chinese and North Koreans were held to Nazi concentration camps were common even in internal U.S. reports.[108] U.S. Ambassador to the South Korea John Muccio alleged that the Guomindang representatives involved in repatriation were "members of Chiang Kai-shek's Gestapo." He passed on reports that Chinese prisoners were being forced to sign petitions in blood and undergo tattooing to prove they were anti-communists and wanted

to go to Taiwan. One report from a prison stated, regarding the enforcement of this policy:

> *In early 1952, the brigade leader, Li Da'an, wanted to tattoo every prisoner in Compound 72 with an anti-Communist slogan... He ordered the prison guards to beat those who refused the tattoo in front of the five thousand prisoners. Some of those who couldn't stand the beatings gave up and agreed to the tattoo. One prisoner, however, Lin Xuepu, continued to refuse the tattoo. Li Da'an finally dragged Lin up to the stage, and in a loud voice asked Lin: 'Do you want it or not?' Bleeding and barely able to stand up, Lin, a nineteen-year- old college freshman, replied with a loud 'No!' Li Da'an responded by cutting off one of Lin's arms with his big dagger. Lin screamed but still shook his head when Li repeated the question. Humiliated and angry, Li followed by stabbing Lin with his dagger... Li yelled to all the prisoners in the field: 'whoever dares to refuse the tattoo will be like him.'*[109]

The true meaning of 'voluntary repatriation' and defection to the 'free world' were well known to the State Department, with Ambassador Muccio reporting to State Secretary Acheson as early as May 1952 that Guomindang overseers in the compounds "dominated proceedings through violent systematic terrorism and physical punishment of those choosing against going Taiwan throughout both orientation and screening phases. Severe beatings, torture, some killings."[110] He had reported four months prior in January to Acheson's aide, Ural Alexis Johnson, that "beatings, torture and threats of punishment are frequently utilised to intimidate the majority of Chinese POWs" as part of "an attempt at forced coerced removal to Formosa [Taiwan] in direct contradiction of the UNC [United Nations Commission] stand at Panmunjom on voluntary repatriation of internees."[111] He later again emphasized in a report to Secretary Acheson the use of "physical terror including organized murders, beatings, threats, before and even during the polling process" to ensure an outcome on the repatriation issue favourable to Western interests. His findings were confirmed by others in the State Department.[112] Muccio later referred to news on the treatment and coercion of Chinese and Korean prisoners as "very disturbing reports of horrors being perpetuated in the prisoners' camps," for which he said the United States was responsible.[113]

A report from the Department Office of Intelligence research similarly observed: "During the months preceding the screening, KMT [Guomindang] POW trusties, with Chinese Nationalist [GMD] and American encouragement and aid, had built up a police-state type of rule over the main Chinese POW compounds, which provided the foundation and means for powerfully influencing the screening against repatriation." This included "enforced tattooing of the POWs" and "violent and terroristic coercion of the POWs by the KMT trusties during the screening." The report concluded that this seriously inflated the numbers of prisoners who 'chose' to defect.[114]

U.S. State Department officers A. Sabin Chase and Philip Mansard were sent to Korea to ascertain why large numbers of prisoners defected and refused repatriation. They concluded in their report that the main reason was "violent tactics of the PW [POW] trustees before and during the screening process." They reported a "police state type of rule" over the prisoner compounds and that prisoners were not only subjected to an "information blockade," but also that physical terror including organized threats, beatings and murders before and during the polling process were all widespread. While the investigators found substantial evidence of coercion, they did not find any significant lack of support for the Chinese government or the military among Chinese prisoners.[115] North Korean doctor Rhee Tok Ki, who was held in prison camps, concurrently reported that ill patients were harassed to the detriment of their recovery to ensure that they would refuse repatriation. "TB patients especially need rest, but they were hounded day and night as a sort of specially refined torture to get them to renounce repatriation," he recalled.[116]

Internal U.S. reports were corroborated by the Red Cross which reported finding "some very grave incidents" regarding the treatment of Chinese and North Korean prisoners particularly relating to coercion over the repatriation issue. Although reporters were not allowed near prison camps, one from the *Toronto Star* managed to enter with a British delegation. His report affirmed that the prisoners chose not to be repatriated due to "physical threats, often carried out." In some cases prisoners were instead given the option either to remain imprisoned indefinitely or to go to Taiwan, and so chose to go to Taiwan based on false information.[117] The

final report by the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission reached the same conclusion, emphasizing that "any prisoner who desired repatriation had to do so clandestinely and in fear for his life."[118]

The extreme means of coercion employed to force prisoners to defect often left them desperate – with some throwing themselves at the barbed wire fences of their compounds.[119] Indian General Kodandera Subayya Thimayya, sent to represent neutral nations, noted that prisoners were generally terrified of their captors and suffered immense pressure to defect. Prisoners tried to place their lives of the Indian observers in hope of better treatment, and on one occasion were reported to have broken out of line and "thrown themselves" at the Indians.[120]

With observers widely reporting that their use of violence and intimidation inflated the number of 'defections' as intended, American officers reported to chief negotiator Admiral Joy that the screening process was not indicative of prisoners' real choice.[121] The admiral himself wrote of the Guomindang controlled compounds that "the results of the screening were by no means indicative of the POWs' real choice," and that, should GMD overseers be removed the numbers wishing to be repatriated would rise "from 15% to 85%." He further noted reports that "a mock screening which had taken place in compound 92 prior to the regular screening. The [GMD] leaders had asked those who wished to return to step forward. Those doing so were either beaten black & blue or killed." Regarding his Army interpreters who witnessed the repatriation process, Joy reported they had "said their experience watching Chinese POWs at the polls convinced them that the majority of the POWs were too terrified to frankly express their real choice. All they could say in answer to the questions was 'Taiwan' repeated over & over again."[122] Although widely referred to in Western histories of the Korean War as a key affirmation of the superiority of Western values and the Western-led order, the prisoner repatriation issue thus instead reflected the depravity of the U.S.-led alliance's practices and the hollowness of their claims to represent any sort of 'free world.'

On October 8, 1952 negotiations entered an indefinite recess, with the American negotiators unwilling to compromise on their new and illegal demands on prisoner repatriation, and their East Asian adversaries, while willing to compromise on this vital issue, not willing to do so to the

extreme extent demanded. The U.S.-led coalition responded with increased bombardment of North Korea and threats to bomb, blockade and launch nuclear attacks against China (see Chapter 3). As part of this the biggest air attack of the war saw over 1200 sorties launched to bomb, napalm and strafe Pyongyang and its surroundings, destroying 1500 buildings and causing mass civilian casualties.[123] Far East Air Forces operations chief Brigadier General Jacob Smart made clear that command viewed all civilians as legitimate targets.[124]

Armistice talks resumed in 1953, with Beijing and Pyongyang largely accommodating Western demands for voluntary repatriation. Although initially requiring that prisoners allegedly refusing repatriation should first be handed over to neutral third parties for six months, to allow them to speak more freely without coercion, they eventually conceded on this point as well.[125] American negotiators continued to press their demands further, and sought that Korean prisoners would not be allowed the luxury of any time in the custody of neutral states and would transfer directly from prison to the Rhee government's jurisdiction. The coalition moved to apply further pressure, and on May 13 began attacks on irrigation dams.

A notable example of escalation within Korea were the American attacks on the Yalu River dams on which 75 percent of North Korea's rice crop relied,[126] which envisioned destroying 250,000 tons of rice[127] and causing huge floods and mass starvation.[128] One report stated regarding the consequences: "The Westerner can little conceive the awesome meaning which the loss of this staple commodity has for the Asian – starvation and slow death."[129] Targeting dams to cause famine was a severe war crime, for which a U.S.-led tribunal at Nuremburg had recently hung Nazi German military leaders,[vii] although American perpetrators inevitably escaped such recriminations.[130] Mass death by famine was prevented only by increased Chinese and Soviet food aid, and while the number of North Koreans who died of hunger during the war as a direct result of the targeting of agriculture was high, the U.S. also targeted relief supplies entering Korea

vii Article 6 Clause B of the regulations set forth at Nuremburg stated that the destruction of dams or dikes was considered a war crime, building on Article 23 of the Hague convention which, while not specifying dams, had outlawed unnecessary targeting of civilian infrastructure.

under Operation Strangle to further exacerbate famine.[131] The official U.S. Air Force history claimed that two of the larger attacks on irrigation dams were the most devastating air operations of the entire war, and "portended the devastation of the most important segment of the North Korean agricultural economy,"[132] bringing the DPRK's ability to sustain the war effort or feed its population into serious doubt.[133]

In the final week of May, shortly after the bombing of irrigation dams, coalition Supreme Commander Mark Clark warned the North Korean and Chinese negotiators that terms for an armistice were "final" and compromises to these would not be accepted. He further warned that if the new Western terms were not accepted, the negotiations would not be recessed but permanently terminated.[134] This ultimatum was conveyed to the Soviet Union on June 3.[135] Threat and maximum pressure appeared to work, and the Chinese and Korean parties both acceded to the general's terms with the signing of the armistice on that basis scheduled to come into effect on July 27.

The armistice stipulated under Article IV Paragraph 60 that a conference be held within three months to settle the question of Korea's division. A late conference was held in Geneva in April 1954 attended by the U.S., China, the USSR, Britain, the two Koreas and thirteen other members of the U.S.-led coalition, at which the Rhee government's representative took a characteristically hard line insisting Seoul could be the only legitimate representative of Korea. It called for U.S. and other Western personnel to remain in Korea indefinitely, unilateral withdrawal of Chinese forces, and elections to be held under its own jurisdiction to reunify the peninsula under it. The DPRK suggested that all foreign forces including the Chinese leave Korea, and that unifying elections be held under the jurisdiction of neither Korean state but instead under a joint all-Korean commission agreed upon by both states to ensure fairness. This was rejected outright, even after China proposed an amendment which would see a group of neutral nations supervise unifying elections to which the North Koreans consented. Again, the knowledge that fair elections would almost certainly yield a result strongly favouring the north, as attested to by the CIA among other prominent sources,[136] had a tangible influence on U.S. and ROK decision-making. Unification under anything less than their own

complete authority had to be rejected outright. Seoul and Rhee himself in particular had, according to U.S. sources, favoured forceful reunification and been highly reluctant to enter into any kind of negotiation requiring compromise, which partly explained why such an intransigent set of terms was put forward.[137] Even Britain and other allies were sceptical that such terms were ever a viable negotiating position, predicting that they would end the possibility of a negotiated settlement.[138]

Had the Western Bloc sought to end the Korean War quickly at any time from November 1951 it could have simply dropped the demand for voluntary repatriation and commenced negotiations in accordance with the Geneva Conventions. Indeed, a peace agreement could have been reached over a year earlier even with voluntary repartition at the original quoted figure of 116,000 prisoners to be returned, which had been accepted by China in April 1952.[139] Additional demands made after multiple rounds of Chinese and Korean concessions served to prolong the conflict by almost two years.[140] While the two East Asian allies appeared tolerant of small Western deviations from their obligations under the convention, including the illegal transfer of small numbers of prisoners to Taiwan and South Korea, they were unwilling to accept what could only be described as gross violations of the law and serious war crimes. These pertained to the brutal mistreatment of prisoners to force them to remain indefinitely behind enemy lines after the war's end.

Use of nuclear threats to press Pyongyang to accept American demands would continue after the signing of the armistice during a number of disputes, and would increase considerably in the 1990s forty years later. America's ability to heavily bombard North Korean population centres, supply lines, military positions and vital infrastructure until an agreement favouring their interests was accepted was hardly lost on the leadership in Pyongyang. Many decades later, the DPRK would come to strongly prize the ability to bombard U.S. military facilities in South Korea, in the wider Asia-Pacific region, and eventually the population centres in the United States itself,[141] ensuring a more equal position which had long been denied it. Without military bases on America's doorstep, as the Americans themselves had in Japan, South Korea, Guam and elsewhere, and without comparable conventional capabilities suited to overseas power projection

such as aircraft carrier groups, the ballistic missile would emerge as the only viable tool for this.

South Korea and the U.S. After the War: Nuclear Weapons and Comfort Women

Before the United States intervention the Korean War had been expected to last little over two weeks and end relatively swiftly and bloodlessly, with neither of the Korean belligerents making significant use of air power, carrying out intensive scorched earth campaigns or destroying population centres with incendiaries as the U.S. would. Widespread public support for the North Koreans among the southern population,[142] and the effective collapse of the ROKAF within days,[143] meant a swift northern victory would have quickly restored something resembling the status quo in September 1945 before the forceful abolition of the People's Republic of Korea by the United States Military. The People's Committees which had ruled before U.S. forces had landed were notably re-established in areas of South Korea under Korean People's Army control, which was a major factor gaining it popular support in the south.[144]

The war would have ended the bloodshed which had been ongoing in South Korea for five years under American rule and subsequently under the U.S.-imposed Rhee government which had killed hundreds of thousands. Western military intervention was thus to the detriment of all Koreans other than Rhee and the small minority which benefitted from his rule. As former CIA Operations Officer and intelligence expert Robert R. Simmons observed of the results of external intervention Korea's civil war, "a potentially swift and relatively bloodless reunification was converted into a carnage."[145] Seoul, for example, when taken by the Korean People's Army in the war's opening hours, saw negligible damage done to the city and few civilian casualties. Three months later it was largely raised to the ground by U.S. forces reflecting to the very different way Western militaries and the Koreans themselves fought wars on Korean land.[146] As correspondent

Reginald Thompson cabled back to London's *Daily Telegraph* after seeing the damage done to the city by U.S. forces to capture it: "Few people can have suffered so terrible a liberation."[147]

After the ceasefire the United States would maintain an indefinite military presence in South Korea, and in June 1957 unilaterally abrogated article 13 (d) of the armistice to facilitate the deployment of nuclear weapons in the country. Although State Secretary John Foster Dulles had initially intended to portray the abrogation as a response to a North Korean or Chinese violation, both were found to be fully in compliance meaning no such pretext could be used.[148] Violations were made in the knowledge that Beijing and Pyongyang's more limited military capabilities left them in a poor position to respond and with minimal leverage. In January 1958 the U.S. thus became the first party to nuclearize the Korean Peninsula, with the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommending that any renewal of hostilities should be immediately followed by a "massive atomic air strike" against North Korean targets. Directives were thus given to launch nuclear strikes in short order, with the number of American nuclear warheads in Korea rising to 950.[149]

With President Rhee remaining in power until 1960, Secretary Dulles repeatedly expressed concern that he could initiate a new round of hostilities. The South Korean leader had opposed any cessation of hostiles from the outset, and tried to sabotage the armistice by insisting the war continued until all Korea was under his control.[150] Dulles informed the National Security Council to this effect: "If war were to start in Korea... it was going to be very hard indeed to determine which side had begun the war."[151] U.S. intelligence reports indicated that the Rhee government was actively considering invading North Korea in the mid-1950s, and in a 1954 address to the U.S. Congress Rhee had shocked even his more hawkish American supporters by calling for use of thermonuclear bombs against the DPRK.[152] The Eisenhower administration's new Korea policy from August 1957, under NSC 5702/2, further allowed U.S. assets including nuclear forces to provide "support for a unilateral ROK military initiative" against North Korea.[153] North Korea had no means of responding proportionally to such attacks.

South Korea remained one of the poorest countries in the world into the 1960s, and in 1965 85 percent of its population were still in abject poverty with economic reliance on the U.S. remaining extreme[154] and prostitution serving American personnel encouraged by the state to provide foreign currency.[155] Ill feeling towards Americans came not only from the nature of U.S. political and military intervention, ranging from burning villages to complicity in Rhee's mass killings, but also from general conduct of U.S. forces towards the population. The U.S. Eighth Army reported in 1951 regarding the apparently sadistic pleasure personnel took in tormenting the Korean people that soldiers "take a perverse delight in frightening civilians" and using force to "drive the Koreans off roads and into ditches."[156] U.S. personnel were known to regularly commit violent, humiliating and abusive acts against Korean civilians who worked for them.[157] As one U.S. Marine stated, effectively summarizing prevailing attitudes: "They're just a bunch of gooks. Who cares about the feelings of people like that?"[158] Historian Lloyd Lewis wrote regarding the indoctrination American personnel received before being sent to war in East Asia: "Soldiers in all branches of the armed services recount receiving the same indoctrination, that the enemy is Oriental and inferior."[159] The population in southern Korea and those in other East Asian states where American forces were deployed, were forced to bear the brunt of this.

An American survey in the 1960s showed that only 13 percent of South Koreans thought Americans "liked them" compared to 70 percent of West Germans who assumed Americans not only liked them but viewed them "as friends."[160] While Americans had greater historical reasons to view the German population as adversaries, cultural and racial factors meant that conduct towards a Western population was always far better than that towards East Asians. The U.S. Military itself appeared to officialise the difference through its publications, promoting German cultural sites as a benefit of deployment while portraying easy access to servile comfort women as the attraction of Korea[viii] – there was not considered to be any culture to speak of worth promoting.[161]

viii Describing the perks of deployment to Korea, the American military newspaper *Stars and Stripes'* description of Korean women as "hovering around you, singing, dancing, feeding you, washing what they feed you down with rice wine and beer, all

Approximately 84 percent of Americans deployed in the Korea surveyed admitted to having used local comfort women, with officers attesting to an overwhelming cultural pressure within the military to seek them out.[162] When U.S. Navy ships were set to dock in Korea or the Philippines, officers "threw the men condoms as if they were Hallmark cards." Officers were known to tell their men that prostitution was a way of life for East Asians, and "enthusiastically promoted" it,[163] strongly contrasting to Korean culture's high value on chastity.[164] Such claims dispelled any moral qualms personnel may have had against making full use of the opportunities provided. This had been the case since the earliest days of the American presence in southern Korea, with U.S. Army Colonel Donald Portway having thus concluded regarding the prime function of the U.S. Military Government from 1945-48: "The American Military government had as its basic purpose the provision of banquets, gifts and feminine company" – a conclusion he was far from alone in reaching.[165]

Use of comfort women reportedly began as soon as the first American personnel landed in Korea, when women held to serve Japanese imperial forces were raped.[166] The Japanese system of comfort stations was subsequently vastly expanded and remained remarkably similar under the U.S.[167] Scholars Maria Hohn and Seungsook Moon, who carried out a detailed investigation into the comfort women system, noted regarding its establishment to service the U.S. Military:

> *Well-paid American soldiers aggressively sought out local women for sexual services. American GIs chased after Korean women in the context of racialized cultural difference, coupled with racism against the Koreans by GIs... Military authorities had to deal with the pervasive problems of the deterioration of military courtesy, discipline, appearance, and training. Under the category of courtesy, the authorities addressed widespread racism against the Koreans, ranging from the use of the racial slur 'gooks,' physical assaults, reckless driving, and undue arrests of Koreans to making aggressive passes at Korean women.... GIs viewed sexual access to Korean women outside the respectability of marriage as their entitlement, as agents of European colonialism did towards colonized women of colour.*[168]

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saying at once: 'you are the greatest.' This is the Orient you heard about and came to find." (Moon, Katherine H. S., *Sex Among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations*, New York, Colombia University Press, 1997 (p. 33).)

From the early days of the U.S. Military Government in early September 1945 there were widespread reports of rapes by American personnel, which according to the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration the Korean population and officials widely complained of.[169] A South Korean soldier interviewed stated to this effect: "I was conscripted into the ROK army and had to do sentry duty at the house of a big-shot American. Each night they took our Korean girls in there to be defiled. I don't want your sort of 'Free World.'"[170] Professor Arissa Oh, an expert on the occupation period, noted regarding these incidents: "Rape of local women was largely undocumented but widespread enough to prompt complaints from South Korean officials."[171] The Austrian wife of President Syngman Rhee, Franziska Donner, highlighted that American personnel were "taking" any Korean woman they wanted by force.[172]

Much like the period of direct American rule, from 1948 the Rhee government and its successors maintained and even encouraged the comfort women system. Professors Uk Heo and Terrence Roehrig noted in their study of South Korean political history that alongside rampant corruption "Rhee also had little expertise or interest in economic development, and his economic ministers were similarly inexperienced and untrained in economic policy making."[173] The resulting poverty meant the comfort women system was seen by the government in Seoul as "an inevitable means to feed its people."[174] By the early 1960s the South Korean government relied on the comfort women system to provide 24 percent of the country's Gross National Product (GNP), far more than the system serving the Japanese Imperial Army ever had.[175] As Kim Ae Ran, a 58-year-old former comfort women interviewed by the *New York Times* in 2009, recalled regarding government policies: "They urged us to sell as much as possible to the GIs, praising us as 'dollar earning patriots… Our government was one big pimp for the U.S. military.'"[176] A *New York Times* investigation showed the South Korean government had been heavily involved in human trafficking in relation to the sex trade providing for U.S. personnel,[ix] highlighting that

ix Jeon, a former comfort woman aged 71, was interviewed by the *New York Times* in 2009. Orphaned in the war she had been forced to enter the system in Dongducheon camptown to service American personnel. "The more I think about my life, the more I think women like me were the biggest sacrifice for my country's

ROK and American documents "do provide some support for many of the women's claims."[177]

The South Korean government's active encouragement of the comfort women system was confirmed in a ruling by the Seoul High Court on February 8, 2018. It concluded: "According to official Ministry of Health and Welfare documents, [the state] actively encouraged women in the military camptowns to engage in prostitution to allow foreign troops to 'relax' and 'enjoy sexual services' with them." The purpose was to strengthen the military alliance and earn foreign currency.[178]

A number of factors forced women into entering the comfort women system, with many forced into it by coercion and fraud. Traffickers and pimps often waited by train and bus stations to greet young girls coming from the countryside, promising them employment and a place to stay. Girls would then be 'initiated' through rape.[179] Advertisements offering jobs as waitresses, shopkeepers and singers frequently lured women to 'initiation ceremonies,' after which they were psychologically broken by the shock and social shame of rape and could be sold into the comfort system. Cultural and psychological factors, and extensive use of a debt-bond system which confiscated most of the women's incomes, often around 80 percent, made escape from the system almost impossible.[180] Alongside involvement in drug trafficking South Korean police were "actively involved in trafficking in women and smuggling them to brothels, thus providing cover and protection for the entire underground sex and drug trade economy."[181]

Methods of recruitment in the American and Japanese systems had important similarities, including a heavy reliance on middlemen who frequently advertised jobs as nurses or factory workers before 'breaking in' women with rape and violence. The Japanese notably saw comfort women as a temporary wartime measure, in contrast to the U.S. where the system in South Korea expanded after Korean War ended following the signing

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alliance with the Americans. Looking back I think my body was not mine, but the government's and the U.S. Military's," she had said. When interviewed, Jeon was subsisting by selling items she picked up from trash for a living, and had been forced to sell the son she had with one serviceman which was common for women in the system. (Choe Sang Hun, 'After Korean War, brothels and an alliance,' *New York Times*, January 8, 2009.)

of the Korea-U.S. Mutual Defence Treaty.[182] Even the excuse that comfort women were needed to redress men risking their lives in combat, which was used to defend Imperial Japan's practices, could not be used by the Americans under whom the system was permanent.[183]

Beyond rape and trafficking, women were often forced into the comfort women system by the destitution that resulted from the policies of both the U.S. Military and Rhee government. The wartime scorched earth policy that, as the *New York Times* noted "left only blackened spots where towns once stood,"[184] destroyed the livelihoods communities had passed down for generations and often millennia which left a large segment of the population with few possessions and no means of providing for themselves. At a conservative estimate, the war created two million refugees in South Korea, and between 20 and 25 percent of the population at the end of the war could not support themselves, with little done to compensate these families or help them restart their livelihoods.[185] The Rhee government's economic ineptitude, focus on militarization, low wages paid to conscripts and poor social welfare further worsened this. Women thus often had to either sell their bodies to American personnel or see their children starve, as reflected in a U.S. State Department report in 1952 which highlighted that half the comfort women were widows.[186]

Professor Arissa Oh concluded in her study of the comfort system: "Many women had few options other than questionable employment in tearooms, restaurants, and bars, where a thin line separated the hostess and the sex worker. Other women were seduced through false promises, or raped. Widows often resorted to sex work to support their children."[187] Seungsook Moon and Maria Hohn concluded following their own investigation that some women were "trafficked through force and deception," while others were recruited through private middlemen. Regarding the latter, they noted, the fact that the majority had been married "suggests that sexual labour was a desperate attempt to feed children and families. Abject poverty and the death, disability, and displacement of men resulting from the war further multiplied the number of women who had to prostitute themselves for survival."[188]

Very far from being consensual work, the conditions which forced women into the comfort system were directly caused by the same external

actors which benefited from having access to large numbers of destitute Korean women. Professor at American University and expert on U.S. overseas military presences David Vine was thus among those to highlight that the comfort system was a continuation of that of the Japanese era – one "absent formal slavery, but under conditions of exceedingly limited choice for the women involved."[189] Slavery nevertheless persisted in a not insignificant minority of cases.

Professor Lee Jin Kyung, an expert on labour migration in South Korea, noted regarding the nature of the "consent" of South Korean women to serve American personnel that it was hardly worthy of the term. It was in fact very similar to the system servicing Japanese forces, but on a far greater scale, she concluded, stating that entry into the system

> *is largely forced on them [Korean women] as a matter of bare subsistence and survival... prostitution is an institutionalization of sexual violence via commercialization, for the ways in which the 'consent' is forcibly manufactured out of unequal social and economic relations among sex workers, their employers and their clients. In other words, considering this inherent coerciveness and structural violence built into prostitution, I would like to conceptualize prostitution as another kind of necropolitical*[x] *labour.*[190]

Author of the Research for the Reform of Law and the Prevention of Prostitution Elaine Kim concluded that the Korean War and the U.S.–ROK Mutual Defence Treaty between them facilitated the comfort women system, and after creating orphans and widows without homes or livelihoods they "mass produced" women and girls who could only provide sexual services or starve.[191] Was not the intentional destruction of Korea and the livelihoods of millions with intensive bombing, a scorched earth policy, and with the forceful imposition of leadership as corrupt and inept as that of Rhee, not an indirect way of forcing women into sexual slavery? By destroying a people's ability to provide for themselves, they were left helpless after which a reliance on American resources could be fostered in exchange for sexual services. American sociologist

x "Necropolitical labour" is a term Lee coined for forced labour, in which there are significant risks of violence and death as evidenced by the number of women killed or otherwise seriously harmed in their work by GIs, but the alternative to which was death.

Kathleen Barry was one of a number of scholars who observed the similarities between the "industrialization of sex" and scale of sexual exploitation in South Korea with the exploitation of conquered women by colonial era conquerors.[192] Professor Lee Jin Kyung at the University of California similarly noted that the U.S. approach was merely a "shift from the Japanese Imperial system[xi] of comfort women" to a new system with the same ends.[193]

The comfort women system became a central part of U.S.-ROK relations, a symbol of the nature of the relationship and an indication of the fate which North Korea managed to spare its people by continuing to resist subjugation. As Professor Katherine H. S. Moon, a leading American export on the comfort system, wrote: "The sexual domination of tens of thousands of Korean women by 'Yangk'I foreigners' [she later puts the total figure at around 1 million women] is a social disgrace"[194] – one which created a strong contrast between the two Korean states. Renowned Korea expert Professor Bruce Cumings, who was deployed to Korea in the 1960s under the Peace Corps, observed firsthand of the comfort women system and what it represented:

> *One element in the Korean-American relationship has been constant: the continuous subordination of one female generation after another to the sexual servicing of American males, to the requirements of a trade in female flesh that simply cannot be exaggerated. It's the most common form of Korean-American interaction, whether you're a private in the Army, a visiting Congressman (for who special stables are maintained), or a Peace Corps teacher... It's also the most silent exchange, as if the trade were chaperoned by the deaf, dumb and blind... It is the aspect that most struck me when I first lived in Korea, creating indelible impressions of a relationship that, because of the use made of Korean*

xi While the Japanese Empire had not left their subjects starving in peacetime, the starvation faced by South Korean women in as a result of U.S. and Rhee government policies meant they had hunger even in peacetime as an incentive to sell themselves. Had the Japan firebombed Korea and enacted scorched earth policies to destroy the people's means of providing for themselves, rather than investing in infrastructure and raising living standards as they did, perhaps more Korean women would have been drawn to "consensual" sex work out of desperation as they were under the American system. This seriously undermined claims that the American system was more ethical.

> *women, could not be what it was said to be: a free compact between two independent nations dedicated to democracy and anticommunism.*[195]

As a member of the Peace Corps stationed in Korea, who witnessed the comfort women system firsthand, Cumings observed:

> *If someone called attention to the ceaseless orgy, all the usual bromine pour forth to drown out the faint cries of peasant girls yanked off a train in Seoul and thrown into a brothel, a thousand little justifications for the abasement of a thousand little girls at American hands...the social construction of every Korea female as a potential object of pleasure for Americans. It is the most important aspect of the whole relationship and the primary memory of Korea for generations of young American men who have served there... When I told an older 'Korea hand' that I was going to Seoul with spouse, he remarked, 'why take a sandwich to a banquet?'*[196]

Cumings observed of the camptowns where exchanges took place:

> *Goofy-looking, stupid soldiers walk arm-in-arm with whores who are often only young girls – very, very young girls. How do these men justify this to themselves... [Koreans] simply hate them [the Americans] and exist by pandering to their ever-base desires... the adults avert their eyes when you look at them, and if they don't, they glare at you with a hatred that can be measured... In Seoul women were available on almost every block – in a bathhouse, massage room, restaurant, or in the ubiquitous tea houses all over the city. You could get them very young, probably around twelve; kids were shanghaied into a kind of slavery as they got off the train from the countryside, looking for work to support their peasant families. Kidnapped, gang-raped and beaten by pimps while learning their few necessary words of English, they were ready for the street in a week.*[197]

Regarding American conduct towards Korean women, sources almost unanimously pointed to high levels of abuse. An independent survey of 243 comfort women found well over two thirds experienced "beating, sexual violence, theft and robbery, in declining order of frequency" at the hands of American personnel.[198] As one said anonymously when interviewed, "some GIs are mean and nasty, especially when they are drunk... at worst a woman encounters a GI who beats her and murders her." Conduct was strongly influenced by the belief among Americans that, as Westerners interacting with Asiatics, they were dealing with inferiors. A U.S. military chaplain quoted by *Time* noted that personnel tended to view Korean women as property, much as Westerners serving at imperial

postings across the world once "owned" sex slaves of conquered nations in Africa,[199] the Americas[200] and elsewhere. He stated: "Some of them *own* their girls... before leaving Korea, they sell the package to a man who is just coming in."[201] Another noted regarding prevailing attitudes: "They were property, things, slaves... Racism, sexism – it's all there. The men don't see the women as human beings – they're disgusting, things to be thrown away... They speak of the women in the diminutive."[202] One comfort woman interviewed recalled American personnel would tell Korean women that they would never beat women in the U.S. but as they were in Korea they were free to do so to Korean women – supposedly as justification. It was common for Korean women to be harshly beaten, as consistently indicated by those interviewed.[203]

American personnel deployed on rotations of around one year, and between 1950 and 1971 around 6 million served in Korea. In this time an estimated 1 million Korean women worked as comfort women servicing U.S. forces, over ten times the number that served the Japanese military, with this figure excluding the very significant numbers who were raped outside the system over decades from 1945.[204]

Following the overthrow of the U.S.-imposed regime of Syngman Rhee and his associates in 1960 and the beginning of military rule the following year South Korea saw a major social and economic turnaround and the beginnings of an economic rise. This resulted in an eventual and gradual reduction in the use of Koreans in the comfort women system in the 1970s. A lasting legacy of the system was the trafficking of foreign women, particularly from the Philippines, to serve U.S. forces in South Korea. This continued on a considerable scale into the twenty-first century with many effectively enslaved.[205] A U.S. State Department report found that trafficked Philippine were so desperate and hungry as to beg U.S. soldiers to bring them bread.[206] A 2007 study similarly concluded that U.S. bases in South Korea were "a hub for the transnational trafficking of women from the Asia-Pacific and Eurasia to South Korea and the United States."[207] Koreans, too, continued to be made victims, with a U.S. State Department report released in 2008 indicating that South Korean females were being trafficked into slavery in the West in significant numbers.[208]

The comfort women system was widely seen "as representative of U.S. domination over Korean politics and the continued presence of U.S. military bases as perpetuation of South Korea's neo-colonial status vis-à-vis the United States."[209] A notable legacy was the greater normalization of the sex trade, with 400,000 establishments offering sexual services by 1989 with between 1.2 and 1.5 million women selling sex.[210] In the early 2010s the sex trade in South Korea made up 4 percent of GDP, as much as fishing and agriculture combined,[211] with up to one fifth of South Korean women between 15 and 29 having at some point worked in the industry.[212]

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CHAPTER 8

Vietnam's Long War: How a Thirty-Year Assault to Impose Western Control Ravaged a Nation

> The trouble is no one sees the Vietnamese people. They're not people. Therefore it doesn't matter what you do to them.[1]
>
> – Telford Taylor, American war crimes expert, on the prevailing attitudes within the U.S. military during the Vietnam War

> The war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit.[2]
>
> – Martin Luther King Jr.

> Sexual violence by invading forces against the local population is a means of articulating and demonstrating power over the victim, emphasizing their helplessness.[3]
>
> – Sara Merger

The Emergence of the Viet Minh and End of the French Colonial Era

Following the surrender of the Japanese Empire in 1945 Vietnam quickly emerged as one of multiple key conflict zones across East Asia pitting the interests of Western empires seeking to impose their hegemony against local nationalists striving for independence. Open warfare in Vietnam would last considerably longer than in any other area, with the underlying nature country's three decades of war, the Western powers' motives for intervening and the conduct of Western militaries, all mirroring broader trends across the region.

French imperial rule had first been imposed on Vietnam in the late nineteenth century, which alongside neighbouring Laos and Cambodia were collectively known as French Indochina reflecting their status as Paris' possessions. Vietnam's first major clashes with French forces, then operating with Spanish support, occurred in 1858 when a Franco-Spanish fleet launched an assault on the city of Da Nang. Although failing, their unprovoked shelling caused heavy civilian casualties. French efforts to impose an occupation persisted, with their assault on the city of Hue described as "an orgy of killing and looting."[4] Such conduct was observed across the country, leading the Vietnamese Emperor to quickly yield southern territories including the city of Saigon fearing the French would otherwise put its population to slaughter. All of Vietnam was eventually brought under French control in 1885.[5]

French imperial policy, to an even greater extent than other European powers, emphasized colonial underdevelopment of its possessions to better exploit their resources and thus enrich the empire's European subjects in France itself. A notable indication was that there were more educators in Vietnam before French rule than after it, with well under 10 percent of children having access to even a basic primary education. This was among the very lowest in the region particularly when compared to Korea, Taiwan and the Chinese mainland.[6] At the time of the French invasion approximately 90 percent of Vietnam's workforce were employed in agriculture, which made widespread French confiscation of land and resulting impoverishment highly unpopular and fuelled support for the Vietnam Workers Party and the Viet Minh nationalist movement – the latter a coalition of nationalist and anti-imperialist parties. A major part of the party's program was repossession of the land appropriated by the French.[7]

French administration quashed any hopes for Vietnamese industrialization, modernization or improvement in living standards, and fiercely promoted cultural Europeanization and the erasing of Vietnam's own civilization. An example was the imposition of the Latin script and outlawing of Vietnam's writing system on the basis that it would better facilitate the people's mass conversion to Catholicism, and as part of a broader repression of Buddhism and fierce promotion the Catholic faith. This was also seen as a means to cut the population off and alienate them from their

literature, history and culture while increasing their affinity with those of France and Europe and neutralizing the country's established scholarly elite.[8] Vietnam's Confucian education system was suppressed for the same reason, increasing reliance on the French education system as part of a process of creating an East Asian equivalent to 'Francophone West Africa.'

Although France had been quickly defeated and occupied during the Second World War, it still perceived itself as a major power with a right to reassert its rule over its colonial possessions. The intention to impose indefinite French rule in Indochina was widely alluded to, with the colonial commissioner of General Charles De Gaulle declaring in 1944 regarding the prize colony: "The aims of France in her civilizing work in the colonies exclude any idea of self-government, any possibility of development outside the French Empire; the formation of independent governments in the colonies, however distant, cannot be contemplated."[9] As had been the case for the Dutch in Indonesia, however, it was near impossible to reassert European colonial rule after Japan's swift and overwhelming victories had not only given local nationalist elements time and space to organize, but also destroyed the idea of Western superiority. As in Indonesia, in Vietnam nationalists with significant popular support declared an independent republic in August 1945, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, placing them at odds with the designs of their former colonizer to reimpose its rule.

200,000 French personnel, aided by a further 200,000 local auxiliaries, were deployed to Vietnam to "exclude any idea of self-government, any possibility of development outside the French Empire." One of the their first offensive operations after Japan's surrender was the attack on Haiphong, the main port city of northern Vietnam, which came to be known as the Haiphong Massacre and caused over 6000 deaths.[10] Intended to "teach a severe lesson" to the Vietnamese, French bombardment from 23–28 November 1946 levelled most of the city as aircraft strafed fleeing refugees.[11] Despite France's overwhelming military advantage the Vietnamese people, like others across Southeast Asia, were unwilling to accept reimposition of Western rule after the Japanese had ended it. Under the leadership of the leftist nationalist Ho Chi Minh the Viet Minh – meaning the 'League for the Independence of Vietnam' – had grown significantly in strength since the eviction of French colonial administration in 1941.

While portrayed in the West as a movement to impose communism, the Viet Minh's cause was much more accurately characterized as one for their country's very independence and dignity which explained both its very widespread popular appeal and the tremendous hardship the population were willing to endure to support it. Communism was seen as a means by which this could be achieved, rather than a primary goal in and of itself, particularly in the context of the Cold War where communist countries represented the leading powers outside Western control.[12]

French forces adopted a declared policy of collective punishment against areas suspected of supporting the Viet Minh, and consistent with their conduct in prior decades they were responsible for widespread pillage and rape. "They raped women, sometimes until they died," survivors would recall years later. Villages near sites of Viet Minh operations were systematically burned down, with civilians blown up in their houses by grenades and populated areas enduring heavy bombardment causing mass civilian casualties. Slaughter of civilians was perpetrated under pretexts such as curfew violation, with public displays of severed Vietnamese heads and public torture of suspected insurgents intended to terrorize the population into submission to French rule. Beheadings had long been a common practice in French colonial wars, with some skulls sent back to Paris for display as trophies. French atrocities are nevertheless thought to have only swelled popular support for the Viet Minh.[13]

Among the atrocities committed, French forces singled out pregnant Vietnamese women in villages suspected of aiding insurgents for rape as a means of cowing the population, with these often resulting in deaths of the women and their foetuses. Regions such as Thinh Tri known for making greater contributions to the resistance saw villages targeted more harshly. One survivor, Mr Quyen, recalled that villagers "always begged the soldiers to spare pregnant women" albeit to little avail. He stated regarding one such incident: "Once, our gatekeeper signalled that the French enemy was coming. So we went down to the tunnels, but some did not [manage to come along]. Then the French burned, and killed, and also raped about 10 [pregnant] women. After the raping, the women had to go to other places [mentioning particular places] to be cured. A few of them died immediately after the raping and abuse."[14] The bayoneting of politically suspect

pregnant women by colonial forces was also widely reported.[15] Writing in *the European Journal of Women's Studies*, scholar Helle Rydstrom noted after widely interviewing survivors regarding the rationale for these kinds of abuses: "Vietnamese testimonies from the French colonial period reveal experiences of a reality of horror... The gender-directed violence of the French forces... sent waves of shock through the community. Pregnant women are prone to being attacked in war as the embodied symbol of an enemy capable of projecting strength into the future by producing children – which, in the eyes of the attacking forces, means more enemies." "The murder of pregnant women and their foetuses for perpetrators like the French forces thus come to symbolize the definitive destruction of an ultimate enemy," she concluded.[16]

The Viet Minh mounted a staunch resistance that left a return to the pre-Japanese status quo impossible. Several thousand Japanese military personnel also chose to stay in Vietnam and trained Viet Minh paramilitaries in warfare and administration, with many serving at the Quang Ngai Military Academy. Former Imperial Japanese officers were even known to lead Vietnamese anti-colonial forces into battle against the French,[17] while others provided valuable training in fields such as night fighting and communications. Several were given Vietnamese citizenship and some were commemorated in Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine for the war dead.[18] The Japanese provision of military knowhow and experience needed to engage the forces of a modern industrial power was critical, and something the Viet Minh otherwise almost entirely lacked.

While recolonizing Indochina would have done much to restore France's wounded national pride, the empire began to withdraw its forces in 1954 after having lost over 20,000 personnel and 55,000 local auxiliaries.[19] The Battle of Dien Bien Phu that year, which cost French forces heavily and demonstrated the growing offensive capabilities of the Viet Minh, was critical in facilitating the signing of the 1954 Geneva Accords under which French forces were withdrawn. The accords partitioned Vietnam into northern and southern governates, the north under the Viet Minh and the south under an overwhelmingly Catholic pro-Western elite installed by France, with unifying elections scheduled for the following year. While 1955 could have potentially marked the end of conflict in Vietnam,

the country's simple struggle for independence had with the Cold War's escalation became a central part of a major U.S.-led effort to perpetuate Western dominance in Southeast Asia.

Although Washington was initially unsupportive of French efforts to recolonize Indochina, the Dutch defeat in Indonesia in 1948, overthrow of the Western-aligned Guomindang government in China in 1949, and the unexpectedly strong performances of North Korean and Chinese forces against Western militaries from 1950, exacerbated the perception of a Yellow Peril. Preventing more East Asian countries from establishing independent governments outside the Western sphere of influence thus became a priority for American policymakers. Immediately after the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 the U.S. began to openly endorse the French war, with extensive material support provided from September. CIA aircraft airlifted paratroopers, artillery and other war materials,[20] and French forces Vietnam were provided with American warships and combat aircraft. American support continued to escalate over the next four years, and by 1954 the U.S. was financing 78 percent of France's colonial war effort.[21] That year President Eisenhower seriously considered launching nuclear strikes to support French forces at Dien Bien Phu.[22] Two U.S. Navy aircraft carrier groups armed with nuclear weapons were deployed to the Gulf of Tonkin for this purpose,[23] although French commanders warned that proximity of Viet Minh units and their own meant this would not be feasible.[24]

Following the French withdrawal, U.S. support allowed the leadership in southern Vietnam to unilaterally cancel 1955 unifying elections in defiance of the Geneva Accords and instead declare a government – the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) which rivalled the Viet Minh headed Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam). Mirroring the case in Korea, this was done as both the Americans and the South Vietnamese were certain that the Viet Minh would otherwise win a landslide victory.[25] U.S. President Eisenhower had concluded based on available intelligence that "had elections been held as of the time of the fighting, a possible 80 per cent of the population would have voted for the communist Ho Chi Minh as their leader."[26] The CIA had predicted in their own report: "If scheduled national elections are held in July 1956... the Viet Minh will

almost certainly win."[27] This decision cost millions of lives and sustained Vietnam's partitioning for two more decades.

The CIA was particularly heavily involved in assisting South Vietnamese efforts against the Viet Minh in the north and backing crackdowns on popular uprisings and guerrilla movements among the southern population. Colonel Edward Lansdale, having directed CIA psychological warfare and other operations in the Philippines against the popular Huk insurgency with outstanding results, trained the South Vietnamese in psychological and covert paramilitary operations.[28] The Military Advisory Group were deployed from November 1955, followed in 1961 by 400 Special Forces. That year President Kennedy authorized "a program for covert actions to be carried out by the Central Intelligence Agency which would precede and remain in force after any commitment of U.S. forces to South Vietnam,"[29] which paved the way for a full-scale U.S. military intervention then being planned.

With the South Vietnamese government having very limited support in either the north or south, Colonel Lansdale engineered a program to reshape public opinion targeting the Catholic minority in particular that proved even more successful than his prior efforts in the Philippines. As CIA case officer Ralph McGehee, who deployed to Southeast Asia from the late 1950s into the 1970s, reported:

> *Lansdale's men, operating in teams in North Vietnam, stimulated North Vietnamese Catholics and the Catholic armies deserted by the French to flee south. SMM [Saigon Military Mission] teams promised Catholic Vietnamese assistance and new opportunities if they would emigrate. To help them make up their minds, the teams circulated leaflets falsely attributed to the Viet Minh telling what was expected of citizens under the new government. The day following distribution of the leaflets, refugee registration tripled. The teams spread horror stories of Chinese Communist regiments raping Vietnamese girls and taking reprisals against villages. This confirmed fears of Chinese occupation under the Viet Minh. The teams distributed other pamphlets showing the circumference of destruction around Hanoi and other North Vietnamese cities should the United States decide to use atomic weapons. To those it induced to flee over the 300-day period the CIA provided free transportation on its airline, Civil Air Transport, and on ships of the U.S. Navy.... It not only convinced the North Vietnamese Catholics to flee to the South, thereby providing Diem with a source of reliable political and military cadres, but it also duped the American people into believing that the flight of the refugees was a condemnation of the Viet Minh by the majority of Vietnamese.*[30]

Lansdale's team was far from isolated, with Lieutenant Tom Dooley who operated with the U.S. Navy out of Haiphong fabricating atrocity stories of the Viet Minh disembowelling 1,000 pregnant women, beating a naked priest on the testicles with a bamboo club, and jamming chopsticks in the ears of children to keep them from hearing Christian scripture.[31] Dooley's ties to the CIA were only uncovered in 1979.[32] Once largely alienated from the population, Catholics would be relied on to run the client government in the south as McGehee observed: "The CIA had completed the imposition of a Catholic premier and the importation of a Catholic encoded army and police to rule a nation that was primarily Buddhist."[33]

Despite these successes, Western intervention and the client government that aligned with Western interests were overwhelmingly unpopular with the Vietnamese population. Mass-based civilian structures associated with the Viet Minh such as the Farmers' Liberation Association, the Women's Liberation Association and various the communist youth organizations, which in some areas certainly included entire populations, were not even acknowledged by U.S. intelligence. According to McGehee, U.S. intelligence appeared to be deluding itself that its adversaries did not have mass popular support. "U.S. policymakers had to sell the idea that the war in the South was being fought by a small minority of Communists opposed to the majority-supported democratic government... The situation, however, was the opposite, as I was to understand later." The U.S. was supporting a "tiny oligarchy against a population largely organised, committed, and dedicated to a communist victory."[34]

The South Vietnamese government's policies largely continued the practices of the French colonial era to the detriment of its popular legitimacy. Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem came to power with strong U.S. support in elections widely accepted by even American sources to have been very heavily rigged,[35] and having been educated in Catholic institutions his policies reflected those of a religious extremist and strongly discriminated against Vietnam's Buddhist majority. The result was something of a religious dictatorship with Diem's government found to have a strong bias against non-Catholics in areas ranging from public service, military promotions and business favours to the allocation of land and tax concessions, with Catholics also exempted from conscription into hard corvée

labour.[36] Diem had himself told a high-ranking army officer: "Put your Catholic officers in sensitive places. They can be trusted."[37] This forced many officers to convert to Catholicism for the sake of their careers.[38] The Roman Catholic Church, which after mass French confiscations of the population's ancestral lands quickly became by far the largest landowner in the country, was exempted from Diem's harsh land reforms imposed on rural communities nationwide.[39] State funds were meanwhile used for projects such as the construction of the Catholic universities of Hue and Da Lat both of which were built specifically to train a new elite with a Catholic allegiance. These state funded universities were placed under the authority of the Vatican.[40]

Vietnamese Buddhists had had a private status imposed on them under French rule, which meant that they required official permission to conduct religious activities in public while Catholics were allowed to practice religion freely and publicly. This continued under Diem.[41] Diem himself openly dedicated his country to the Virgin Mary in 1959,[42] and frequently flew the flag of the Vatican at public events.[43] Several Catholic priests were allowed to run private armies which were known to force conversions and engage in looting and shelling of Buddhist pagodas.[44] Protests led by the country's Buddhist leaders against religious discrimination were met with raids by special forces, destruction of holy sites and the killing of hundreds of civilians with hundreds more wounded. 1,400 monks were arrested, and the revered statue of Gautama Buddha was demolished.[45] Government forces were known to pour chemicals over the heads of praying Buddhist protestors, which in one case hospitalized sixty-seven of them. The brutality of the Catholic elite in its repression of the Buddhist majority was so great that even Diem's U.S. allies voiced their disapproval.[46]

In May 1959 Diem's government passed Law 10/59 creating a system of drumhead courts capable of handing out death sentences for even trivial offenses, effectively prohibiting all opposition.[47] Conditions later worsened as U.S. intelligence and the South Vietnamese government together created blacklists of civilians suspected of supporting the Viet Cong insurgency, with those named being kidnapped and either killed outright or tortured and detained for years without trial. At its height quotas of eighteen hundred neutralizations per month were imposed, described by analysts as a

"means of terrorizing the neighbouring population into a state of submission." Such operations escalated from 1967 under the Phoenix Program run by the CIA, which CIA officer Lucien Conein described as "a very good blackmail scheme for the central government. 'If you don't do what I want, you're VC,'" with nothing more than the word of an informant needed to have someone disappeared.[48]

The South Vietnamese government's actions fuelled support for the Viet Cong, which continued to grow in strength despite U.S. financial and military aid, training programs and deployment of special operations forces. It appeared only a matter of time before the Viet Minh through the Viet Cong gained control of the country, and much like the Chinese Guomindang and the Rhee government in South Korea it was clear that no amount of aid could save a corrupt and immensely unpopular Western client regime from collapse. While hardliners in the U.S. for years lamented not having launched a full-scale war effort to keep the Guomindang in power in China, this would be done in Vietnam to prevent a further diminishing of the Western sphere of influence in the region.

America Goes to War in Vietnam

U.S. involvement in Vietnam was part of a broader response to the new "Yellow Peril" – a fear that even after Japan's defeat new East Asian powers were rising outside the sphere of Western control. With this sphere declining rapidly as Indonesia, China, Korea, Vietnam and various insurgent groups across the region increasingly resisted Western power, maintaining client governments such as that in South Vietnam, and isolating China from the wider region, were increasingly seen as imperative. Much as had been the case in Indonesia and elsewhere, hegemonic intentions and the quashing of resistance to Western control were frequently justified by presenting the cause as one against communism. It was easier to justify a war to save East Asians from a vilified 'evil' and 'atheist materialist' ideology than it was a war to maintain Western hegemony and empire. Indeed, at the height of the Cold War the term 'communist'

could be applied to any figure threatening Western interests – ranging from nationalist leaders such as Indonesian President Sukarno who had actively fought against communist insurgencies to Martin Luther King and the African American Civil Rights Movement which were frequently portrayed as communist agents.[49]

Viet Minh leader Ho Chi Minh had written multiple times to the White House asking for help in obtaining independence from French occupation, and even modelled Vietnam's Declaration of Independence on that of the United States. As reported by an officer from the Office of Strategic Services, Ho had even sought advice from Washington on how to frame the declaration.[50] The Vietnamese independence movement was initially influenced more by the American revolution than the Soviet one, and Ho reportedly had a picture of George Washington and a copy of the United States' declaration of independence on his desk – not a picture of Joseph Stalin or a communist manifesto. As Ho's vision for an independent Vietnam conflicted with the interests of Western hegemony in the region, however, he and the Viet Minh were portrayed as part of a communist menace which paved the way for action targeting them.

Maintaining a client state in South Vietnam was largely motivated by the perceived need to contain China, due to concerns that Beijing could form the heart of an East Asian power bloc that would diminish Western control of the region and develop independently to eventually rival the West. As the Pentagon Papers warned:

> *China... looms as a major power threatening to undercut our importance and effectiveness in the world and, more remotely but more menacingly, to organize all of Asia against us. The long-run U.S. policy is based upon an instinctive understanding in our country that the peoples and resources of Asia could effectively be mobilized against us by China or by a Chinese coalition and that the potential weight of such a coalition could throw us on the defensive... Our ends cannot be achieved and our leadership role cannot be played if some powerful and virulent nation is allowed to organize their part of the world according to a philosophy contrary to ours.* [51]

The Pentagon Papers highlighted that policy decisions in Vietnam, including the bombing of North Vietnam and personnel deployments to the south, "make sense only if they are in support of a long-run United

States policy to contain China" – which overshadowed the entire war effort.[52]

U.S. President Lyndon Johnson, who took power from 1963, had previously been a leading critic of the Eisenhower administration's failure to help preserve French colonial rule and appeared particularly eager to intervene in Vietnam.[53] As president he exhorted his aides to do more against the Viet Cong,[54] and according to Defence Secretary Robert S. McNamara he "felt more certain than President Kennedy that the loss of South Vietnam had a higher cost than would the direct application of U.S. military force."[55] Much of the military and civilian leadership supported escalation up to and including mass air strikes on industrial targets across North Vietnam to force it to cease support for the Viet Cong insurgents in the south.[56] By 1964 the U.S. already had approximately 16,500 personnel in South Vietnam who, although officially called military advisors, were very frequently involved in combat operations.[57] By June it had deployed air units to strike insurgents as well as communist-held areas of neighbouring Laos. The CIA had been heavily involved in covert operations as early as 1954,[58] and from 1961 saw commando teams inserted into North Vietnam for reconnaissance and sabotage operations. This campaign was described by Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Pacific Command, Admiral Harry D. Felt, as targeting "power plants, railroads, bridges, VIP residences, and the like."[59] Setbacks including heavy losses suffered in failed CIA attacks were part of broader trends that led to a growing consensus in Washington that a greater direct use of force was needed to turn the tide.[60]

In July the commander of the U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam, Lieutenant General William Westmoreland, initiated an offensive campaign under Operational Plan 34A deploying South Vietnamese patrol boats to bombard northern coasts.[61] On the 22nd South Vietnamese Air Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky confirmed that following three years of sabotage missions against the north, South Vietnamese naval forces had from July 31 escalated to begin unprovoked attacks on northern coastal and island installations with U.S. approval.[62] July 31 was also the day the U.S. Navy destroyer USS Maddox began operations off the North Vietnamese coast, having just been equipped with extensive signals intelligence equipment and embarked seventeen associated specialists in Taiwan. It was tasked with

simulating attacks on the North Vietnamese coast as part of the effort to "locate and identify all coastal radar transmitters."[63] The ship sailed with special electronic surveillance equipment through a battle zone and close to North Vietnam's coast just after allied southern ships had initiated offensives.[64]

Alongside a simultaneous U.S.-directed commando raid,[65] South Vietnamese ships launched a second round of larger assaults on August 3-4.[66] The Maddox was ordered to approach the North Vietnamese coast to draw the northern patrol boats away from the area where the attacks were being launched,[67] meaning it was operating as part of an unprovoked offensive operation.[68] Allegations subsequently emerged that North Vietnamese patrol boats had fired on the Maddox, albeit causing no damage, which was used in Washington as pretext for an immediate escalation of the war effort. Within half an hour of the incident's end President Johnson overruled the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet to order major air strikes on North Vietnam, despite his staff having yet determine whether an attack had indeed occurred, with the strike targeting naval bases and an oil storage facility using fighters based on nearby aircraft carriers.[69] Johnson framed the alleged attack on the American ships as "open aggression on the high seas against the United States of America," and as a result the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was hastily passed in the Senate and the House of Representatives on August 7.[70] This empowered the president to drastically escalate U.S. military involvement and facilitated open-ended American military operations across Southeast Asia.[71] The president's National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy described the push for a rushed congressional resolution as an attempt to "go for it on the basis of some snap event and a surge of feeling around the snap event" – something he advised against.[72]

The Pentagon notably misinformed the Senate and the press about where alleged clashes with the USS Maddox had occurred, and more than doubled the distance away from the Vietnamese coast which combined with failure to mention the ship's participation in southern attacks at the time served to cast North Vietnam as an aggressor.[73] A preliminary congressional resolution had been drafted by the Johnson administration from February to June awaiting some kind of incident, no matter how small, which could

trigger it to be tabled.[74] Indeed, President Johnson informed Senator J. William Fulbright on July 26, a week before the first incident and nine days before the second, that he planned to soon go to Congress to request a resolution on Vietnam – meaning the incidents could not have come at a better time.[75] It later emerged from multiple official sources, including the president himself, that there had been no attack on the USS Maddox despite its participation in hostilities against North Vietnam, and that this had been fabricated to provide pretext for escalation.[76] White House tapes released in 2002 showed that even Johnson was highly sceptical that North Vietnam had attacked, and contributed to mounting evidence from the preceding thirty-eight years showing that North Vietnam's innocence was "well established" – in the words of the U.S. Naval Institute's Acting Director of Naval History and Senior Historian of the Navy Dr Edward J. Marolda.[77]

The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which was quickly passed on the pretext of an attack which never happened, served as a blanket endorsement of several rounds of escalation and the rapid expansion of the war effort including the largest bombing campaign in world history. It targeted North Vietnam, the Viet Cong, and supply routes in neighbouring Cambodia and Laos.[78] Within one month ninety-three U.S. warplanes had been dispatched to South Vietnam and Thailand, and within a year 200,000 American troops were in South Vietnam.[79] This figure quickly grew to over 500,000, with the resolution justifying open-ended American military operations across Southeast Asia.[80] While French forces had bombed villages killing hundreds at a time, making considerable use of napalm while forcing villagers into concentration camps, the U.S.' much larger war economy and greater investment in the war effort led it to do much the same on a far greater scale.[81]

War in Vietnam continued for eleven years after the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, during which severe war crimes were very widely committed and an estimated 3.8 million Vietnamese were killed – the large majority of them civilians.[82] As victory continued to elude the United States in the face of unyielding Vietnamese resistance, it resorted to increasingly radical methods and turned to a strategy of attrition for lack of tangible objectives. This involved maximizing damage to Vietnamese resistance forces

and their civilian support bases as a goal in and of itself, which due to how widespread the latter was very often meant indiscriminate attacks on the population. The purpose was to kill enough of the Viet Cong and the civilians on which they relied that they would be unable to continue the war. As Air Force General Curtis LeMay noted, when asked how to overcome a determined adversary: "If you kill enough of them, they will stop fighting."[83] LeMay was a supporter of massive and indiscriminate bombing of North Vietnam, similar to that he had directed against Japan, and advocated operations "shove them back to the Stone Age with Air power or Naval power."[84] The war harshly tested the resolve of the Vietnamese population and its willingness to resist subjugation – a trial withstood due to the fundamental importance of what they saw to be at stake – the right to sovereignty, national dignity and the independence. Interviews recorded across the country after the war consistently strongly indicated that this was at the core of their resolve to endure the terrible trials imposed on them.[85]

My Lai Massacre: A Unique Incident or a Revelation of Common Practice?

On March 16, 1968, U.S. Army personnel from the 23rd Infantry Division moved into the small South Vietnamese village of Son My, killing villagers in their rice fields without warning. Over 500 civilians were quickly slaughtered including infants and the elderly, with many women and young girls gang raped,[86] before the Americans mutilated the bodies of the dead.[87] The attack was entirely unprovoked and no shots were fired at the Americans. The *BBC* reported:

> *Soldiers went berserk, gunning down unarmed men, women, children and babies. Families which huddled together for safety in huts or bunkers were shown no mercy. Those who emerged with hands held high were murdered... Elsewhere in the village, other atrocities were in progress. Women were gang raped; Vietnamese who had bowed to greet the Americans were beaten with fists and tortured, clubbed with rifle butts and stabbed with bayonets. Some victims were mutilated with the signature 'C Company' carved into the chest.* [88]

Private First Class Michael Bernhardt recalled the events which occurred at Son My:

> *I walked up and saw these guys... Setting fire to the hootches and huts and waiting for people to come out and then shooting them... going into the hootches and shooting them up... gathering people in groups and shooting them... As I walked in you could see piles of people all through the village... all over. They were gathered up into large groups. I saw them shoot an M79 [grenade launcher] into a group of people who were still alive. But it was mostly done with a machine gun. They were shooting women and children just like anybody else. We met no resistance and I only saw three captured weapons. We had no casualties. It was just like any other Vietnamese village – old papa-sans, women and kids. As a matter of fact, I don't remember seeing one military-age male in the entire place, dead or alive.*[89]

Helicopter gunner Larry Colburn recalled: "These were elders, mothers, children and babies... They [U.S. personnel] come into a town and rape the women, kill the babies, kill everyone... And it wasn't just murdering civilians. They were butchering people. The only thing they didn't do is cook 'em and eat 'em. How do you get that far over the edge?"[90]

Son My was part of the My Lai group of villages, and the incident came to be known as the My Lai Massacre. Similar massacres were very far from uncommon, but that particular incident was unique in how well publicized it was – albeit more than a year after it occurred after extensive efforts to cover it up failed. Ron Ridenhour, an American serviceman in Vietnam, was largely responsible for exposing the massacre after he collected information from several witnesses. He sent letters detailing the exact events, including names and locations, to a number of leading political figures. Although media outlets were generally uninterested in covering American war crimes, with such reports consistently dismissed throughout the Cold War as communist propaganda, Ridenhour's perseverance eventually bore fruit.[91] These efforts helped turn public opinion against the war effort, causing a public relations crisis for the U.S. Military which responded with extensive efforts to portray the My Lai massacre as a one-off incident. Personnel responsible were court martialled and the blame placed solely on them, which helped avoid criticism of the Army, the Military and war effort as a whole. Lieutenant William Calley who had commanded U.S. forces at My Lai was particularly singled out for blame.

Attributing atrocities to the actions of a few low-level personnel in an isolated incident was an effective means of salvaging the image of the military and avoiding questions being asked regarding how the wider war was being fought. As American investigative journalist and historian Nick Turse observed:

> *Ridenhour's letter, filled with names, locations, and description of the mass killing, soon had Washington buzzing. Looking for a suitably low-level fall guy on whom to hang responsibility, the army settled on Lieutenant William 'Rusty' Calley, who had commanded Charlie Company's 1st Platoon at My Lai and had no shortage of blood on his hands. Conveniently enough, Calley was no West Pointer, but a product of the Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, which churned out low-level commanders for Vietnam after just months of training; placing the blame entirely on him would avoid sullying the reputation of the army's academy-trained top ranks, thus protecting the public image of the army as a whole. In September, Calley was charged with the murder of 109 'Oriental human beings' and quietly hidden away at Fort Benning.*[92]

Lieutenant Calley and the soldiers under his command had in fact conducted themselves far from atypically, and the officer recalled that personnel were conditioned perceive all rural Vietnamese civilians including and particularly children as adversaries.[93] Their punishment was only a result of the fact that they were unfortunate enough for the My Lai massacre to be publicized – where frequent similar atrocities across the country never became known. As U.S. Colonel David H. Hackworth commented in response to depictions of My Lai as an isolated event: "Vietnam was an atrocity from the get-go... There were hundreds of My Lais. You got your card punched by the numbers of bodies you counted."[94] The testimonies of Vietnamese survivors widely painted the same picture of massacres being highly common.[i] Perhaps the best indicator of this was that a very similar but totally unrelated massacre that occurred on the very

i As one witness, Huynh Phuong Anh, recalled, "the Americans parachuted soldiers in for mopping-up operations, and when we would pass through villages where they had been, we would find only bodies – in the trees, on the ground, and women with cloth stuffed in their mouths. The people were gone, only wounded and the dead. You see, when the Americans came through they killed everyone, even children." (Hess, Martha, *Then Americans Came: Voices From Vietnam*, New York, Four Walls Eight Windows, 1993 (p. 111).)

same day at the village of My Khe under an entirely different unit, with the Pentagon notably taking significant measures to hide the My Khe massacre as it effectively undermined their portrayal of My Lai as freak incident.

Lieutenant General William Peers notably avoided reporters' questions about My Khe, while Pentagon briefers lied outright blaming the massacre on allied South Vietnamese forces.[95] Colonel Henry Tufts, the head of the army criminal investigative command, commented years later regarding how the Chief of Staff obscured the truth that: "He did what he had to do to sort of preserve the system."[96] As Nick Turse observed based on his own extensive study:

> *The Pentagon was especially dismayed that Peers had chronicled not only the slaughter at My Lai by Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, but also the killings carried out on the same day in the nearby village of My Khe by the men of Bravo Company, 4th Battalion, 3rd Infantry. The whole Pentagon strategy centred on portraying My Lai as a one-off aberration, rather than part of a consistent pattern of criminality resulting from policies set at the top. Having two different massacres carried out within hours of each other by two entirely different army united in two separate villages was hardly compatible with that message.*[97]

My Lai was indicative not only of what was happening throughout Vietnam, but was also highly consistent with broader trends in U.S. and Western conduct across East Asia whether in Japan, Indonesia or Korea. As U.S. General Willoughby responded to the "fuss" being made about the My Lai massacre: "In Korea we had My Lais all the time."[98] He pointed to it being far from an exceptional case to receive the media attention that it did – and in this regard he was entirely correct.

Facilitators of Terror

American conduct towards the Vietnamese population and widespread atrocities as seen at My Lai were influenced by a range of factors, one of which was severe and rampant drug abuse. The Vietnam War came to

be known as the 'first pharmacological war' because, much more so than even in Korea, prescribed and self-prescribed consumption of psychoactive substances by American personnel took place on a scale unprecedented in history. This led British philosopher Nick Land to describe the Vietnam War as "a decisive point of intersection between pharmacology and the technology of violence."[99]

In 1971 28 percent of American personnel in Vietnam took hard drugs, namely heroin, and by 1973 70 percent of personnel used intoxicants.[100] The situation was serious enough that during a trip to Vietnam Egil Krogh, President Nixon's liaison to the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, reported: "Mr. President, you don't have a drug problem in Vietnam; you have a condition. Problems are things we can get right on and solve. Conditions we have to ameliorate as best we can. I don't think we can solve this short of bringing everybody home."[101]

The fact that personnel were heavily drugged for combat was partly responsible for their aggressive and often sadistic behaviour towards the Vietnamese population. Many narcotics were prescribed by the military itself, while others were tolerated as necessary supports to allow personnel to operate effectively and cope with the war's hardships. Drug use notably increased significantly after the Viet Cong launched the Tet Offensive in 1968, which increased the pressure on American personnel considerably. Drugs were considered an effective means to help handle such pressures amid flagging morale.[102]

The drug amphetamine, according to a navy commando, was "routinely consumed. They gave you a sense of bravado as well as keeping you awake. Every sight and sound was heightened. You were wired into it all and at times you felt really invulnerable." Professor Lukasz Kamienski, an expert on the use of drugs in warfare, concluded based on his research on Vietnam: "In short, the administration of stimulants by the military contributed to the spread of drug habits that sometimes had tragic consequences, because, as many veterans claimed, next to alertness amphetamine increased aggression. Some remembered that when the effect of speed faded away, they were so irritated that they felt like shooting 'children in the streets'... Amphetamine was to blame for... unjustified violence against the civilian population." Among other stimulants reportedly given out

'like candies,' amphetamine was distributed to soldiers by the military on a large scale. A 1971 report by the United States House Select Committee revealed that from 1966 to 1969 the military had used 225 million tablets of these stimulants.[103]

While drugs were an important facilitator of atrocities, they were far from the only one. As had been done very similarly in the Philippines, Japan and Korea beforehand, the extreme dehumanization of the population played a central role. Perceptions of East Asian peoples as subhumans was best exemplified by the 'Mere Gook Rule' – a code of conduct in Vietnam intended to make it easier for American personnel to kill Vietnamese with 'gook' being a derogatory term for East Asians. American soldiers were told when stationed in Vietnam: "Gooks are gooks... The rule in Viet-Nam was the M.G.R – the 'mere gook rule': that it was no crime to kill or torture or rob or maim a Vietnamese because he was a mere gook."[104] Telford Taylor, a prominent American lawyer specializing in war crimes, commented on how prevailing attitudes towards the Vietnamese facilitated war crimes: "The trouble is no one sees the Vietnamese people. They're not people. Therefore it doesn't matter what you do to them."[105]

Serviceman Scott Camile testified regarding the psychology of personnel committing rapes and massacres against Vietnamese civilians: "It wasn't like they were human... They were a gook or a Commie and it was okay."[106] Veteran Joe Bangert similarly testified that "in regards to the women in Vietnam, first of all, you get this feeling sometimes when you're over there that you don't even think of their sex. This is really disgusting. You don't even think of them as human beings, they're 'gooks.' And they're objects; they're not human, they're objects."[107] He described watching another serviceman, not a new recruit but a veteran with twenty years of service, disembowel and skin a Vietnamese woman. He further recalled: "You don't even think of them as human beings, they're 'gooks.' And they're objects; they're not human, they're objects. The general rule was a Vietnamese who is dead is confirmed Viet Cong and one who is living is a Viet Cong suspect."[108] One veteran recalled that rape was "pretty usual over there... Cause they're not treated as human beings over there, they're treated as dirt."[109] As American researcher Elizabeth Anderson thus concluded: "Some Americans assumed that all Vietnamese civilians were the enemy... The

process of racial othering allowed some Americans to commit violence against civilians with impunity."[110]

Drugged and often seemingly insane,[111] personnel conditioned to see almost any action towards Vietnamese people as permissible also had a third major reason for committing atrocities and specifically for massacring civilians. This was the U.S. Military's encouraging and incentivizing of soldiers to maximize body counts largely due to a lack of tangible objectives in the campaign. This was attested to by Colonel David Hackworth who stated: "You got your card punched by the numbers of bodies you counted."[112] Body counts included Vietnamese civilians suspected of aiding the Viet Cong, which meant essentially all civilians living near where insurgents were thought to be operating. As the *BBC* reported:

> *Unable to deal with an enemy that dictated the time and place of combat, U.S. forces took to destroying whatever they could manage. If the Americans could kill more enemies – known as Viet Cong or VC – than the Vietnamese could replace, the thinking went, they would naturally give up the fight. To motivate troops to aim for a high body count, competitions were held between units to see who could kill the most. Rewards for the highest tally, displayed on 'kill boards' included days off or an extra case of beer. Their commanders meanwhile stood to win rapid promotion. Very quickly the phrase – 'If it's dead and Vietnamese, it's VC' – became a defining dictum of the war and civilian corpses were regularly tallied as slain enemies or Viet Cong. Civilians, including women and children, were killed for running from soldiers or helicopter gunships that had fired warning shots, or being in a village suspected of sheltering Viet Cong.*[113]

A combination of rewards for maximum casualties, drugs, a gross lack of accountability for crimes against civilians, and a perception of the enemy as being less than human were a terrible and effective combination which caused extreme suffering for the Vietnamese population at the hands of U.S. forces. The very young average age of American frontline personnel meant they tended to be particularly impressionable. Recalling his interview with a Vietnam War veteran, Nick Turse provided insight into the psychology of American personnel and the way it was influenced by the military stating:

> *He [Vietnam veteran] talked about how they were going through a village and burning it down, which was standard operating procedure. And in the midst of this, this woman runs up and grabs this GI by the sleeve, and is tugging at him and yelling at him – obviously*

> *because her home is being burned down, all her possessions are going up in flames. And she's angry, scared, upset. And he said this GI just pushed her off, and then took his rifle and hit her squarely in the nose with the butt. And he said her face just erupted in blood. She was screaming. And the GI just turned around and walked away laughing. And he paused a second and said, 'Do you know that GI was me?' He had such a tough time figuring out how he could have done it. All these years later. At the time he didn't think anything of it... He told me about how the training that he went through dehumanized the Vietnamese to the point where they didn't think of them as human. They thought of them as – they had a whole bunch of slurs that were used: dinks, slopes, slants, gooks. And he talked about how 'I didn't become exactly like a robot but it was like that.' You're trained to kill, you chant 'Kill, kill kill.' It psychologically readies you for this.*[114]

Turse further observed regarding the importance of dehumanization:

> *The idea is that the Vietnamese weren't real people. They were sub-humans. Mere gooks who could be abused or even killed at will. And this is something that was inculcated in troops from the earliest days of training. I talked to a lot of veterans who told me that as soon as they arrived at boot camp, they were told you never call them Vietnamese. You call them gooks, dinks, slants, slopes. Anything to take away their humanity. Anything to make it easier to kill them. They were told by their superiors that all Vietnamese were likely the enemy. That children might carry grenades, women were probably the wives or girlfriends of guerillas, and they were probably making booby traps. And even if there were rules of engagement on paper, or little cards handed out saying to treat the Vietnamese properly, the message that they were really given was that it was a lot safer to shoot first because no one was going to ask questions later...*
>
> *The troops in the field, they were pressed for bodies. Their commanders were leaning on them heavily. You were told to produce Vietnamese bodies, and if you didn't you were going to stay out in the field longer. They learned pretty quickly that the command wasn't discerning about what bodies were turned in, that just about any Vietnamese bodies would do. This pushed American troops toward at least calling in all Vietnamese who were killed as enemies, and also to the killing of detainees and prisoners and civilians, and calling them in as enemy dead. This coupled with the much higher level of strategic thinking like the use of 'free fire zones,' which was basically a legal fiction that the U.S. came up with to open wide swaths of the countryside to unrestrained bombing and artillery shelling. This caused tremendous amounts of death and destruction in the countryside. And it opened it up to all this heavy firepower and made it inevitable that large numbers of civilians would be killed or wounded.*[115]

The psychology of American personnel resulted in a wide range of sadistic acts beyond killings. Investigations found, for example, that not only

was it common for civilian prisoners to be slaughtered, but also tortured. This was done using fists, sticks, bats, water and electric shocks.[116] Rape of Vietnamese women and children was highly common, and was often carried out using bottles and rifles.[117] Executions following rapes were highly common, with men who raped and then killed Vietnamese women widely referred to as "double veterans."[118] One veteran described such an incident as follows: "After we raped her, took her cherry [virginity] from her, after we shot her in the head... we literally start stomping her body. And everybody was laughing about it. It's like seeing the lions around a just-killed zebra. You see them in these animal pictures, Wild Kingdom or something. The whole pride comes around and they start feasting on the body."[119] Another example was recalled by former GI John Ketwig who stated that when three young Vietnamese women were captured, "everybody circled around and they tortured these women with lit cigarettes... the one girl, they held her down and put the hose from the fire truck between her legs and turned on the water and exploded her. And the explosion of body fluids splashed across our faces." He described it as a "revenge type of thing: hate against the Vietnamese, the 'gooks.'"[120]

The perception of rapes and killings as justified on the basis that the Vietnamese population had put American personnel through the hardships of war was widespread. As one veteran recalled "In Vietnam you identify every gook with the enemy... You feel it's their fault we're there. If it weren't for the Vietnamese, we wouldn't be there."[121] Another stated to justify the rape of a Vietnamese woman: "The general attitude was, we are over here helping these people. The least they could do was lay a little leg on us." Many felt they were owed anything they wanted including sex.[122] Another veteran, immediately after describing how he and others had raped and murdered a Vietnamese girl in front of her father, complained that the Vietnamese ought to be more appreciative of American 'support': "We expected them to run out and welcome us like that World War II type of thing... But they were a little standoffish." He strongly implied either that the rape was punishment for this attitude or that the ability to rape was an apt reward for Americans' fighting effort.[123] American researcher Elizabeth Anderson highlighted a widespread "belief that Vietnamese women's role in the war was sexual gratification of American men... an understanding of

Vietnamese women as existing for the sexual gratification of Americans," as expressed by servicemen in interviews.[124]

Instructors and commanders very widely condoned and at times promoted rape, which was often seen as a means of enhancing the performances of personnel or of letting them blow off steam.[125] As Anderson noted, "almost all of the men whose testimonies I have reviewed say that the leadership within their unit either directly encouraged sexual violence or passively allowed it to exist." In part as a result "sexual violence was an indisputable part of the war, and undercurrents of gendered violence appear in almost every historical account of atrocities in Vietnam."[126] Infantryman Michael Farrell recalled: "Our platoon sergeant told us (I'm going to gentle down the language), he said, 'If there's a woman in a hootch, lift up her dress, you know, and tell by her sex; if it's a man, kill him; and if it's a female, rape her.'" The sergeant was a veteran of two previous wars, and may well have learned such practices in Korea, Okinawa or elsewhere.[127] Some personnel reported that their commanders instructed units to kidnap women for 'entertainment' while on patrol, who would face hours of gang rape and then death.[128] At times commanding officers saw that they had to outperform their subordinates in rapes to cement their positions of leadership, with one recalling: "I was in charge of a group of animals, and I had to be the biggest animal there."[129]

Many U.S. personnel recalled being told by instructors from the Marine Corps: "We could rape the women," "spread them open" and "drive pointed sticks or bayonets into their vaginas." As a squad leader in the 34d platoon attested: "That's an everyday affair... you can nail just about everybody on that – at least once." While the military officially disapproved of such practices, in practice it was accepted as necessary. Rape and threat of rape were widely used strategically as well as recreationally – an effective way of enforcing submission as well as obtaining information from both prisoners and civilians.[130] British historian Professor Joanna Bourke concluded to this effect: "Raping or killing civilians sent out a warning to the guerrillas (and people suspected of helping them)."[131] Elizabeth Anderson similarly observed regarding the use of rape that "the unique breed of fear generated by the threat of sexual violence became a potent weapon against the civilian population and the North Vietnamese fighters thought to be

hiding within it."[132] As one veteran testified regarding the use of rape to cow the population: "It makes a lasting impression on some guy – some 'zip' – that's watching his daughter get worked over. So we have a better opportunity of keeping him in line."[133]

Personnel from the 23rd Infantry Division recalled men raped Vietnamese women "on the average of once every third day."[134] Those from the 2nd Platoon said women would be raped whenever the company passed through a village, with one recalling: "Rape? Oh, that happened every day."[135] Infantryman Jamie Henry referred to rape as "SOP" – standard operating procedure – in his unit.[136] Associated Press reporter Peter Arnett was among those to highlight not only the high prevalence of rapes by U.S. personnel, but also that gang rape was more common than individual assault.[137] CBS reporter Dan Rather similarly observed: "Everybody who passed through a village did it – steal a chicken and grab a quick piece of ass, that sort of thing."[138]

Vietnamese civilians widely recalled extremely frequent rapes by U.S. forces as well as the arbitrary rounding up of civilians for torture in areas suspected of supporting the Viet Cong.[139] It was frequently reported by survivors that women often had their breasts cut off as part of torture and interrogation, and that U.S. personnel would take turns raping or sometimes gang rape women in custody. Many women went insane in American custody.[140] As Elizabeth Anderson observed, "sexual violence – and violence against civilians more generally – became a military tactic. Servicemen report using sexual abuse as an interrogation technique,[ii] either against

ii Searches of civilians were often also used as opportunities for rape, with veteran Scott Camile recalling at a congressional hearing organized by South Dakota senator George McGovern: "When women were searched... [t]hey would be stripped naked, and kind of a game was made out of it. Like, men would put their fingers up their vaginas, supposedly searching for articles. And they would say, 'I think my penis is a little longer, and I will try with that and see if there is anything there.'" Another veteran highlighted that such practices were encouraged in training, stating: "They have a class on when you interrogate a POW or a villager what to look for – where they hide things. They stress over and over that a woman has more available places to hide things." (Weaver, Gina Marie, *Ideologies of Forgetting: American Erasure of Women's Sexual Trauma in the Vietnam War,* Houston, Rice University, 2006

the women in question or by threatening rape in order to get information from male family members."[141] Rape as a means of torturing suspected Viet Cong supporters was widely reported by both Americans and Vietnamese sources as a well-known practice, and at times resulted in death.[142]

Rapes were often extremely violent, with some villages targeted seeing raped women die immediately while others took time to die over the next few days due to injuries sustained.[143] Rapes[iii] of pregnant women were also reported widely.[144] One Vietnamese survivor, interviewed as 'Mr. Bao,' recalled that in areas suspected of supporting Viet Cong: "The American soldiers killed every family they found in the shelters. They rounded up the women. They cut off their ears, and they raped them. They threw old people in the river."[145] Another survivor recalled: "Most of them were barbarous... what we remember most is the barbarity. They burned houses, they stole, they beat people, and they killed them... I can tell you many women now are paralysed, they have half a body, because they were beaten and tortured by the Americans. They tortured women with electricity. They did many, many terrible things."[146] Conduct notably contrasted strongly with those of both North and South Vietnamese personnel.[147] The trends seen in Vietnam and the kinds of atrocities committed closely mirrored those perpetrated by U.S. forces in Korea and Japan where, while not as heavily drugged, they had similarly been conditioned to perceive East Asian populations in such a way that such conduct was seen as highly permissible.

(p. 130).) (Vietnam Veterans Against the War, *The Winter Soldier Investigation: An Inquiry into American War Crimes*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1972.)

iii Vietnamese-American writer Le Ly Hayslip recalled of her childhood that Vietnamese women including her mother and sister "mixed red vegetable dye with water and stained the crotches of their pants. They said it would make the [U.S.] soldiers think they had their periods and discourage any ideas of rape. Unfortunately, a few soldiers didn't care what stains were on a woman's pants, but that was every girl's risk in [their village of] Ky La." (Le Ly Hayslip, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places,* New York, Doubleday, 1989 (p. 10).)

Chemical Weapons and the Lingering 'Orange Pain'

Beginning in 1962 two years preceding the Gulf of Tonkin incident the United States Military made very extensive use of toxic chemicals against Vietnamese civilians, the effects of which are expected to continue to scar the country for generations.[148] Approximately 75 million litres of chemical herbicides and defoliants were sprayed under the area defoliation program Operation Ranch Hand. This method was based on the successful British defoliation of Malaysia's forests to combat independence fighters there, and its implementation in Vietnam destroyed over 30 million acres of farmland and forest (an area larger than the whole of North Korea or three times the area of Switzerland).[149]

Across much of the country Operation Ranch Hand left concentrations of chemicals in soil and water hundreds of times greater than those considered safe.[150] By 1971 12 percent of South Vietnam had a concentration of defoliating chemicals at thirteen times the concentration recommended, with ten million hectares of agricultural land destroyed.[151] The purpose was destruction of the livelihoods of the Vietnamese rural population. A report to the U.S. Congress in 1965 regarding the spraying of chemicals in Vietnam stated: "Crop destruction is understood to be the more important purpose... but the emphasis is usually given to the jungle defoliation in public mention of the program."[152] Vietnamese survivors widely referred to "forest and farmland turning into desert" as a result of these programs.[153]

The targeting of crops received strong support from the Pentagon leadership, with the RAND Corporation think tank stating in a 1967 memorandum: "The fact that the VC obtain most of their food from the neutral rural population dictates the destruction of civilian crops... if they [VC] are to be substantially hampered by the crop destruction program, it will be necessary to destroy large portions of the rural economy – probably 50% or more."[154] With subsistence farming highly prevalent the totally indiscriminate targeting of crops was inevitably devastating, leading to malnourishment and starvation throughout targeted areas. In Quang Ngai province 85 percent of arable land was scheduled for destruction in 1970 alone, and this was not an exceptional case. This drove people to

desperation and, as in Korea before, into the hands of the enemy. As intended under the American program of Forced Draft Urbanization, the targeting of crops and deliberate destruction of rural peoples' livelihoods forced entire villages to migrate to cities. From 1958 to 1971 the urban population increased from 2.8 million to 8 million as a result, with many living in poverty and 1.5 million living in slums.[155]

Concentrating the rural population in what survivors very widely referred to as "concentration camps" in cities[156] was intended to isolate the Viet Cong from their support base,[157] with others referring to terrible conditions and rapes by U.S. and allied personnel of those held inside.[158] Vietnamese families forced to leave their farmland were very often destitute and at risk of starvation, and as a result many women and young girls were forced to sell their bodies to personnel from the very same military that had destroyed their livelihoods to subsist. This closely mirrored the case in South Korea were the policy of burning down farms and villages left women destitute and forced them to provide sexual services to U.S. and Western forces or starve. With some in the American military leadership voicing the need for availability of Vietnamese prostitutes for their personnel,[159] by the end of the war half a million Vietnamese women made their livelihoods through such work.[160]

As U.S. personnel were so often drug abusers and viewed the Vietnamese as subhumans,[161] this led to widespread and severe abuses of Vietnamese women not only in the villages where they were raped, but also when forced to sell themselves.[iv] Military historian Elizabeth Hillman was among those to observe the connection between sexual violence in the war and conduct towards prostitutes, further noting that American personnel often took out their rage and frustrations, for example for defeats in the field, on them.[162] Servicemen recalled witnessing rapes and killings of prostitutes by others

iv Availability of prostitutes was notably often dismissed as an alternative to rape, with one veteran recalling: "You don't want a prostitute. You've got an M-16 [rifle]. What do you need to pay for a lady for? You go down to the village and you take what you want." Regarding the power Americans had in the country he recalled: "It was like I was a god. I could take a life, I could screw a woman." (Baker, Mark, *NAM: The Vietnam War in the Words of the Men and Women Who Fought There,* New York, First Cooper Square Press, 2001 (p. 191).)

personnel, with some bragging about their exploits. "Boy did I beat the shit out of a whore. It was really fun," one soldier bragged.[163] Nick Turse reported regarding the forced sexual relations between Americans and Vietnamese women: "I felt I didn't have the language to describe exactly what I found in the cases, because rape or even gang rape didn't seem to convey the level of sexual sadism."[164]

The war in Vietnam notably also fuelled the growth of a large sex trade in neighbouring Thailand,[165] which was a staging ground for American operations and saw the number of prostitutes grow from 20,000 to between 500,000 and 700,000 during the conflict. As a result 6.2–8.7 percent of Thai women aged between 15 and 34 were working as prostitutes by the end of the Vietnam War.[166] The U.S. military presence and their practice of buying Thai women introduced a new word into the Thai language – *mia chao* meaning 'rented wife.'[167] The Thai government, itself a close partner of the United States at the time, was contracted to provide 'rest and relaxation' and the country came to be known as 'America's Brothel' as a result – a term coined by a U.S. senator.[168] American Professor of History and Asian studies Bradley R. Simpson observed that "the U.S. presence profoundly affected Thai society, fuelling a massive temporary service economy geared to meeting the economic and sexual needs of American troops, as well as an explosion in the regional trafficking of drugs and women's bodies that long outlasted the war."[169] The Vietnam War had been injecting $16 million per year into the then tiny Thai economy, and GI spending accounted for 40 percent of the country's export earnings. As a result when the war ended sex tourism was resorted to as a replacement for this major earner of foreign currency, and would long remain the largest source of foreign exchange.[170]

The United States Military's widespread use of comfort women was extremely consistent in its conflicts across the region, with American scholar Cynthia Enloe noting regarding the American presence and its commitments to its regional client states: "None of these institutions – multilateral alliances, bilateral alliances, foreign military assistance programs – can achieve their militarizing objectives without controlling women for the sake of militarizing men."[171] This had severe repercussions for the Vietnamese and Thai societies. Japanese Okinawa, which remained under American military rule until 1972, was similarly affected as high numbers of American

personnel deployed in Vietnam were sent there for 'rest and recreation' while it remained a hub of American supplies for the war.

One of the defoliants used under Operation Ranch Hand was Agent Orange – a combination of multiple chemicals which when produced for war in Vietnam was contaminated with TCDD (2,3,7,8-Tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin). This was the most poisonous form of dioxin proven to cause cancer and other serious illnesses, and one of the most toxic chemicals ever used on such a scale in populated areas with approximately 11 million gallons used over Vietnam. The first use of Agent Orange was by British forces in Malaysia, which had employed it on a far smaller scale for counterinsurgency.[172] While the U.S. Military consistently denied that TCDD and other chemicals affected humans it subsequently offered its veterans compensation for a number of diseases they suffered after handling dioxin, with multiple investigations leaving little dispute as to its effect on human health.[173]

Regarding the lasting effects of defoliation efforts, researchers decades later consistently emphasized that it was a "present-day contamination issue" rather than a historical problem, with dioxins entering food chains and being taken up by local populations. As the United States Military particularly targeted farmland, much of the land contaminated would be inhabited after the war.[174] Dioxin levels have been found to persist throughout the environment causing severe adverse effects, and even years later were found in high levels in the breast milk of Vietnamese women. It also severely impacted the country's wildlife, with parts of the country targeted having a far lower diversity of birds and mammals.[175]

After carrying out an investigation Vietnamese doctor Nguyen Viet Nhan highlighted that in areas where Agent Orange was used children continued to suffer from serious health issues, and were more than three times as likely to have cleft palates, suffer from mental retardation, or to have extra fingers or toes, and nearly eight times as likely to suffer hernias.[176] This legacy of the war would continue to strain the country's health services well into the twenty-first century, imposing a significant and continuing burden on Vietnam. Dr James R. Clay, former senior scientist at the Chemical Weapons Branch of the Air Force Armament Development Lab in Florida, attested to the fact that the United States was knowingly

using defoliants which would poison the Vietnamese population. He stated: "When we initiated the herbicide program in the 1960s, we were aware of the potential for damage due to dioxin contamination... We were even aware that the military formulation had a higher dioxin concentration than the civilian version due to the lower cost and speed of manufacture. However, because the material was to be used on the enemy, none of us were overly concerned."[177] The 'enemy' referred to was the rural population of supposedly allied South Vietnam. The United States was challenged by United Nations resolutions over its use of toxic chemicals in Vietnam, with General Assembly Resolutions 2162 B and 2603 highlighting that its conduct was a war crime.[178] The U.S. denied these allegations and refuted the charges on the basis that chemicals targeted the environment rather that the population.

Severe genetic diseases directly resulted from U.S. use of toxic chemicals in Vietnam, with 4.8 million Vietnamese exposed to Agent Orange while over 40 years later 3 million continued to suffer related illnesses according to the Vietnamese Red Cross.[179] Other estimates were far higher. Nguyen Thi Phuong Tan, director of a rehabilitation centre for children with chemical weapons induced genetic abnormalities, stated that 5 million Vietnamese

> *have incurable chronic diseases due to Agent Orange. They can't lead normal lives or find jobs... When, after the war, people started having kids with abnormalities, they realized what 'orange pain' means... If the poison gets into a person's body, it stays there forever. People who have been affected by the poison have developed cancer and diabetes. They also suffer from brain cell degeneration, leading to muscular dystrophy and mental problems. These conditions stem from gene mutations which can be passed on for generations.* [180]

The Vietnamese government was forced to set up special schools for the high numbers of children born with severe birth defects, with second and third generations of babies continuing to be born with deformities due to their parents or grandparents' exposure to American chemicals. As former combatant Nguen Than, whose son was born deformed, recalled in 2014: "The Americans tried to frighten us. We prayed the bombs would avoid us as we ourselves couldn't avoid them. I hated them with all my heart and passed this hatred onto my child. He hates them with

all his heart, too. They completely destroyed this province. This area was poisoned but we didn't know it. We just went on with our lives. We only realized when we started having kids. Then we hated them more. What's there to talk about now?"[181]

The U.S. Veterans Administration listed prostate cancer, respiratory cancers, multiple myeloma, diabetes mellitus Type 2, B-cell lymphomas, soft-tissue sarcoma, chloracne, porphyria, cutanea tarda, peripheral neuropathy and spina bifida as being highly common in the children of persons exposed to Agent Orange. This affected not only much of the Vietnamese population but also some Americans who were accidentally exposed.[182] Mike Hastie, a former U.S. Army medic in Vietnam who subsequently studied the effects of American defoliation efforts, concluded: "The spraying of 70 million litres of Agent Orange on the Vietnamese people by the United States Government, is one of the worst war crimes ever committed in modern warfare. It is the war crime that is born again with every new generation. Children die from cancer, they are born without arms and legs, they are born with twisted bodies, mental illness, or no eyes, to name a few birth defects." He stressed that this continued to place an "enormous burden" on their families and on Vietnamese society.[183]

Chemical contamination will likely continue to harm the Vietnamese people over half a century after the war's end, although it represented just one of several harmful legacies of the way the United States fought. As Vietnam veteran Chuck Searcy highlighted in a 2014 interview regarding the Vietnamese population's continued suffering as a result of the weapons used against them: "For America the war ended in 1975. For the Vietnamese the war has still not ended."[184] During the war 15 million tons of explosive ordinance were dropped on Vietnam from the air, of which the Pentagon estimates around 10 percent did not explode. As a result over 100,000 Vietnamese people were injured by unexploded ordinance after the war ended, with considerable further casualties in neighbouring Laos and Cambodia from U.S. bombing of Viet Cong supply lines.[185] The extent of the issue was brought to light in early 2022 when it was revealed that unexploded American ordinance had been a primary cause of difficulty in the construction of a high speed rail line in Laos, delaying the project and imposing considerable additional costs. Over half a million tons of remained littered across Laos, which per capita was the most heavily bombed country in human history.[186]

The U.S. bombing campaign against Vietnamese population centres was so severe as to be strongly criticized even in allied Western states, which was almost unheard of in the context of the Cold War. The extent of the attacks was compared by Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme to the holocaust perpetrated by Nazi Germany, while media in West Germany noted that "even allies must call this a crime against humanity."[187] During the bombing campaigns against neighbouring Laos and Cambodia, U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had famously described the indiscriminate targeting[v] of the population using all assets as "anything that flies on anything that moves,"[188] with the 5 million tons of munitions dropped killing hundreds of thousands.[189]

In April 1975 North Vietnamese forces captured the southern capital Saigon with the U.S. and its Western and regional allies forced to quickly withdraw. The lack of popular legitimacy of the Western client government in South Vietnam was widely seen to be key to its undoing. As observed by former director of the South Korean Central Intelligence Agency, Brigadier General Kim Hyong Uk, in a testimony to the U.S. Congress in 1977: "Just before the fall of Vietnam, the ratio of the South Vietnamese to the North Vietnamese was 3 to 1 in military troop strength and 7 to 1 in weapons and equipment. But in contrast with the corruption of the ruling elite and the lack of ideological conation of the South Vietnamese soldiers, because the North Vietnamese had strong ideological convictions they defeated the South."[190]

Mike Hastie, a former U.S. Army medic in Vietnam who subsequently studied the effects of the conflict, concluded that South Vietnam's population working with the Viet Cong and North Vietnam were "willing to lose everything... All you have to look at is the millions of civilians who sacrificed their lives for the cause of independence" and "never supported the puppet governments the U.S. put in power."[191] Interviews with civilians across South Vietnam similarly indicated that tremendous sacrifices were willingly made, often over generations, to free the country from subjugation to Western interests.[192]

v As one Vietnamese survivor, interviewed as Mr Pham Van Hung, recalled regarding the bombing of his own country, "the Americans didn't leave a roof tile intact. Even the smallest bridge over a tiny stream had been bombed over and over." (Hess, Martha, *Then Americans Came: Voices From Vietnam*, New York, Four Walls Eight Windows, 1993 (p. 102).)

Although failing to sustain a client government in South Vietnam, the U.S. achieved its most crucial objective by preventing Vietnam's emergence as a vibrant independent power under Ho Chi Minh and a potential model decolonizing state in the region. With its land covered with countless American shells and poisoned with chemicals, its population scarred and widely suffering from severe trauma,[193] its villages and cities burned to the ground by incendiaries, and its non-aligned foreign policy lost as it was forced to depend on Soviet support, Vietnam was no longer a potential model for success to the region. Denied reparations and facing decades of American economic warfare, the Vietnamese state would struggle to provide those affected by the war with the care they needed which further stymied the country's rise that had begun when French rule ended in 1941. While the Viet Minh could not be crushed, the nation as a whole could be crippled so as not to recover for generations.

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PART II

Post-Colonial Empire: Sustaining Western Hegemony in Perpetuity

CHAPTER 9

Japan After the War: From Primary Challenger to Key Upholder of Western Hegemony

> Why must the State Department insist that only the lives of American boys be used? Why cannot other peoples of the earth be used also to help create the necessary seawall of blood and flesh and steel to hold back the communist hordes?[1]
>
> – Senator Joseph McCarthy

> It was still difficult to imagine a sovereign Japan as anything other than dependent on and subordinate to the United States – a client state in all but name.[2]
>
> – John Dower

Japan and the United States: Assimilating the Empire of the Sun into the Western-Led Pacific Order

Following the defeat of the Japanese Empire the country was quickly realigned under American military rule turning it from the leading impediment to Western control of East Asia into a key facilitator of continued Western hegemony. Much of the empire's apparatus was quickly taken over by the United States and turned against challengers to American power, including the use of Japanese forces in the Chinese Civil War which U.S. President Truman described as "using the Japanese to hold off the communists."[3] Much the same was done by the British in Indonesia, where Japanese forces were sent into battle to capture territories from local nationalists before handing them over to British control. [4] Japanese counterinsurgency specialists were deployed by the U.S. in 1949 to quash an insurgency on Cheju Island in South Korea,[5] and Japanese naval units

subsequently supported American operations during the Korean War including minesweepers that played a key role in the Inchon Landings in September 1950. 79 percent of tank landing ships carrying the U.S. Marines into their most pivotal battle against the North Koreans at Inchon were also Japanese manned.[6]

With Japan under direct U.S. military rule until 1952, thousands of Japanese technicians could be sent to aid their war effort in Korea.[7] Japanese child soldiers, it emerged from declassified U.S. National Archive reports in 2020, also accompanied the U.S. Military in its initial deployments in Korea.[8] American prisoners of war reported there were Japanese nationals held in the Chinese and North Korean POW camps, indicating that at least some where captured.[9] Japanese military scientists who had worked on developing biological weapons, including leading figures from the infamous Unit 731, were absorbed into America's own biological weapons program. Given full amnesty from war crimes charges, they provided invaluable information from their mass experimentation on Korean and Chinese civilians. Former Unit 731 scientists were reportedly deployed to Korea where the U.S. was widely alleged by international investigators, including some of the Western world's leading scientists, to be involved in biological warfare.[10]

In South Korea the apparatus of Japan's colonial government was largely maintained, and even its comfort stations were taken over and expanded under U.S. Military rule.[11] The ruling elite of the Japanese imperial era were kept in power, and as a result a South Korean government study in the early 2000s found that over 90 percent of pre-1990 ROK elites had ties to collaborationist families or individuals.[12] In the military, too, every South Korean armed forces division in 1950 without exception was commanded by former Imperial Japanese officers.[13] The country's first Chief of Staff General Yi Ung Jun, for example, had previously pledged fealty to the Japanese Emperor in blood.[14] Adviser to the United States' Korean Economic Mission Pak Hung Sik observed to this effect: "The central figures in charge of national defence are mostly graduates of the former Military College of Japan."[15] According to both South Korean and American reports, these officers committed widespread and severe atrocities

against the local population but were highly effective at quashing opposition to American designs.[16]

In Japan itself the imperial order was largely kept intact but placed under new American directives, with the country's economy rebuilt even more heavily dependent that before on trade with the U.S. and Western powers while American intelligence agencies deeply penetrated and intervened heavily in Japanese politics including its elections. As MIT professor and award-winning historian John Dower noted, it was "difficult to imagine a sovereign Japan as anything other than dependent on and subordinate to the United States – a client state in all but name."[17] Bruce Cumings similarly referred to Japan as a key part of "a historically unprecedented system of semi sovereign states" with the country, much like the Philippines and other clients across the region, granted independence only in name while policy continued to be heavily shaped by the U.S.[18]

Under American rule a strictly pacifist constitution was written for Japan which, under Article 9, stipulated the country was to "forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes... land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized."[19] At a time when a regional power balance highly favourable to Western interests was expected, with China's Western-aligned Guomindang government projected to emerge victorious from the civil war and help uphold Western-led order thereafter, Article 9 was intended to ensure Japan would never again challenge Western dominance.

Only after the GMD's unexpected defeat and the 'Loss of China' in 1949 was rearming Japan and reinvigorating its economy seen as imperative for U.S. and Western interests, marking the beginning of significant and persistent American efforts to quickly remilitarize Japan. This was done in the expectation that a stronger Japanese military would play a greater role in upholding the Western-led order in East Asia and would only be used against challengers to Western power – namely North Korea, China and the Soviet Union. A draft of U.S. policy document NSC 48, written just weeks after the GMD's defeat, described the island chain formed by Japan and GMD-held Taiwan as "our first line of offense from which we

can seek to reduce the area of communist control, using whatever means we can develop, without, however, using sizeable U.S. armed forces."[20] Calls to press for Japan's remilitarization escalated further in 1950 after the string of wholly unexpected victories by Chinese and North Korean forces against the U.S.,[21] and having been one of the world's leading military and industrial powers Japan was expected to be shaped into a potent asset against Western adversaries.

Despite constitutional restrictions on military force having been externally imposed, the war-weary Japanese public remained supportive of pacifism which forced the U.S. military government, and later the Japanese government under U.S. pressure, to go to considerable lengths to disguise remilitarization. After the Korean War's outbreak in June 1950 the U.S. military government moved quickly to create Japan's first post-war ground force, which although called the National Police Reserve were armed for inter-state conflict with American Sherman and Chaffee tanks. Calling them 'special vehicles' rather than tanks meant that on paper Japan had no tank units. Within six years Japan was testing its first post-war domestically manufactured tanks, supposedly also for its 'Police Reserve,' which were fielded alongside artillery and combat aircraft. The legality of this rearmament program was seriously questioned even by U.S. officers responsible for training Japanese forces.[22] Chief of Staff of the U.S. Military Advisory Assistance Group in Tokyo, Colonel Frank Kowalski, played a leading role in overseeing the training the first U.S.-armed Japanese forces which he described as "a little American army."[23]

While the U.S pressed for militarization across its client states such as South Korea, South Vietnam and the Philippines, Japan's size and its history as a major imperial and industrial power was seen to give it a greater military potential. It was almost impossible without amending Article 9, however, to allow Japan to openly send military forces to fight alongside the United States abroad – with the Japanese assets playing important roles in Korea doing so covertly. The 'little American armies' of South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand and others, by contrast, could commit tens of thousands of personnel to U.S.-led war efforts.

Initial American attempts to remilitarize Japan were opposed by the country's conservative Shigeru Yoshida government, by prominent business

circles and by the general public. Prime Minister Yoshida maintained that the constitution would need to be revised for Japan to acquire 'fighting potentiality,' although his position was largely ignored as the United States created and quickly rapidly expanded the National Police Reserve. A February 1952 poll showed that when Prime Minister Yoshida denied the country was rearming, 48 percent of the Japanese population believed he was outright lying while only 12 percent believed he was truthful.[24] Had the Yoshida government, the business elites and the Japanese people not collectively strongly opposed remilitarization and supported Article 9 in the 1950s Japan likely would have quickly fully remilitarized under American pressure and gone on to aid the U.S. more extensively in its military interventions abroad.

Seemingly panicked by its defeats in Korea in 1950 the U.S. pressed for the creation of a standing military force of between 300,000 and 350,000 personnel, although this was seen as far from feasible considering the state of both Japan's economy and of public opinion. Prime Minister Yoshida argued that this would not only overwhelm and distort the economy, but also provoke nationwide protest with destabilizing effects. He further argued that it would seriously agitate neighbouring countries whose populations had lived under Imperial Japanese rule. Yoshida also believed, quite accurately based on the precedents set by the United States' other clients, that if Japan had a sizeable military it would come under immense pressure to provide more direct combat contributions in Korea and other theatres.

The Prime Minister was eager to keep Japan from fighting what were then seen as America's wars, and when U.S. State Secretary John Foster Dulles visited Tokyo to push for remilitarization Yoshida sent clandestine emissaries to socialist party leaders urging them to hold demonstrations outside his office. This would convey to Dulles the dangers of remilitarization for domestic stability due to the extent of popular opposition.[25] Widespread anti-American sentiments meant there was a risk that public opposition could destabilize Japan and push pro-Western elements out of power – a possibility emphasized by Yoshida to ensure the 'National Police Reserve' did not exceed 75,000 men. This allowed Japan to focus on economic development and avoid diverting resources to support Western military interventions abroad.[26]

75,000 men and the gradual introduction of tanks, warships and combat aircraft was a compromise between America's interest in a full and rapid remilitarization and its fear of blowback should it force this process too quickly. The aim of a fully militarized Japan ready to fight against Western adversaries, however, would be pursued more gradually. Chief of Staff Kowalski thus referred to "a calculated, creeping rearmament well tuned to the will of the Japanese public and the Allied reaction." He emphasized that this was not done due to the will of the Japanese public or leadership itself, but rather because it aligned with American interests, stating: "The Japanese did not initiate the rearmament of their nation... Japan has an Army, Navy and Air Force now only because General MacArthur, assuming international authority, expanded the police forces of the nation."[27] Japanese forces were expanded to 110,000 personnel in 1952,[28] and by 1972 reached 150,000 with considerable further growth planned.[29] Over decades wartime memory faded, the public grew accustomed to an indefinite U.S. Military presence, and portrayals of challengers to Western hegemony as menacing and threatening to Japan itself eroded public opposition to militarization which ensured American goals could gradually be achieved.

Free, Yet Not Free: Japan's Nominal Independence

Direct American military rule over Japan ended on April 28, 1952, with the implementation of the San Francisco Treaty. It occurred at a time when Western colonies across East Asia were being nominally granted independence under terms which ensured that neo-colonial relationships and a Western sphere of influence were sustained (See Chapter 5). This was particularly critical in a time of Cold War when it was essential to guarantee that former colonies would not form ties with the Soviet Bloc or China. Thus much as the USSR had done in Eastern Europe and Mongolia, across Western colonies direct occupation gave way to nominal independence masking the continued control of the former occupier. Independence in foreign policy in particular was far from genuine. As

former White House National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski observed, "sovereignty today is nominal. Any number of countries that are sovereign are sovereign only nominally and relatively."[30] Such neo-colonies extended worldwide as Western empires had, providing the Western Bloc with a massive sphere of influence which was a vital advantage during the Cold War.

Japan was a key example of a Western client that was "sovereign only nominally and relatively," with John Dower observing regarding the terms under which direct U.S. rule ended:

> *Although in the end the peace treaty would involve scores of nations, the Americans controlled the peacemaking process; and the exact price Japan would be called on to pay for incorporation into a Pax Americana became apparent only bit by bit. Rearmament under the American 'nuclear umbrella' was but one part of that price. The continued maintenance of U.S. military bases and facilities throughout the country was another. Okinawa was excluded from the restoration of sovereignty (just as it had been excluded from the occupation reforms) and consigned as a major U.S. nuclear base to indefinite neo-colonial control... The communist countries would refuse to participate in a settlement that locked Japan so tightly into U.S. containment policy. In the parlance of the day, Japan had been given the choice of a 'separate peace' or no peace treaty at all; although Japanese progressives and leftists called with great passion for an 'overall peace' coupled with Japan's disarmed neutrality, this was not a realistic option.*[31]

Accompanying the 1952 San Francisco Treaty, the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty was perhaps more inequitable than any other bilateral arrangement the United States entered into in the post-war period. America retained exceptional extraterritorial rights, and the number of military installations demanded was far in excess of what either the Japanese or international observers had anticipated. Hanson Baldwin, the oracular military commentator for the *New York Times*, thus pronounced it the inauguration of "a period when Japan is free, yet not free."[32]

When U.S. military rule ended there were almost no changes to the deployments of American military personnel in Japan. A subordinate independence and continued military occupation were not seen as a significant change, with restoration of nominal sovereignty seeing little celebration despite how strongly American rule had been opposed. In a poll conducted at the time the Japanese people were asked whether their country had

become independent, to which only 41 percent answered affirmatively.[33] To the majority it was clear that Japan was still under American control, but following their defeat there was little they could do.

Regarding Japan's status, professor of International Relations at the University of London Michael Cox was among many to highlight

> *a series of unspoken but well-understood bargains between the United States and Japan's dominant ruling coalition for over half a century, Japan's Liberal Democratic Party. The first was an acceptance by Japan that Japan would accept its subordinate position within an American-led Pacific order in exchange for an American guarantee of its security. This in turn assumed low military spending by Japan and a declaration that it would never possess, or even seek to acquire, weapons of mass destruction. The second part of the bargain was more specifically economic. This not only allowed Japan easy access to U.S. markets, it also placed Japan at the very heart of the East Asian economic region for the next forty years. Finally, underpinning the relationship was a recognition that while Japan might pursue certain external policies of its own, these would never be at the expense of the United States. Japan in effect would be a semi-sovereign state with only a limited capacity to determine its own foreign policy choices.*[34]

While Japan would benefit economically from its privileged position relative to other Western client states, the "well understood bargains" referred to were far from consensual with the Japanese leadership's role in setting the terms being negligible.

Three days after the 1952 peace treaty came into effect over 1,000,000 Japanese citizens took to the streets in 330 May Day rallies across the nation. It came to be known as bloody May Day. The major May Day rally in Tokyo was largely organized by the Sohyo labour federation on the grounds of a Meiji Shrine opposing war, U.S. military bases and Okinawa's status as an American possession. Approximately 400,000 people gathered in protest, endorsing slogans such as 'Oppose rearmament – fight for the independence of the race,' and referring to April 28, the day of the peace treaties, as "The Day of National Disgrace."[35] Protestors subsequently marched to the plaza in front of the Imperial Palace chanting anti-government and anti-American slogans and holding placards read 'go home Yankee' in English. Courts and the government were at odds over whether protests were forbidden there, but when police attacked with tear gas and firearms violence erupted leaving over 25,000 from both protesters and police injured. Many

were wounded in the back as they attempted to flee police retaliation. Referring to the incident, Prime Minister Yoshida appropriated an image of Korea saying a 'thirty eighth parallel' ran through the heart of the Japanese people. Acceptance or rejection of Japan's new subservient relationship with the United States was at the centre of conflict much like in Korea.[36]

Unlike the remainder of Japan, Okinawa remained under American military rule for twenty-six years and even afterwards hosted the majority of U.S. forces in the country. After their island's capture in June 1945 the population had been placed in concentration camps where thousands died due to malnutrition and disease,[37] and were released only after the war's end to see one third of their land occupied by American bases. Referred to in 1965 by former U.S. ambassador to Japan Edwin Reischauer as a "colony of one million Japanese," who stressed the contrast between how Okinawans and populations of defeated European adversaries were treated,[38] the territory was used extensively for biological and chemical weapons testing. Testing and both leaks from and accidents with the extensive chemical and nuclear arsenals stored on Okinawa contributed to the extreme erosion of public health, with contamination from a wider range of pollutants from the U.S. Military causing deaths from poisoning and on several occasions leaving accessible food sources and drinking water unusable.[39] The indefinite and vast American presence also exposed Okinawans to frequent sexual assaults by U.S. servicemen[40] including gang rapes of children "just for fun" – in the words of the perpetrators,[41] as well as drink driving, murder, disfiguring of the dead,[42] crashes and noise from military aircraft and extreme pollution endangering local wildlife.[43] As one Okinawan victim of assault by American personnel, Yumi Tomita, recalled regarding the state of fear and widespread crimes: "So many were being raped... U.S. soldiers often barged into people's homes looking for women. Locals used to ring a warning bell whenever a soldier was nearby. People protected women by hiding them in closets whenever they heard the bell." As a schoolgirl she remembered: "Sometimes I'd be walking down the street, and I'd be chased by a U.S. soldier. I had heard of women being raped in our area, but those incidents were not reported."[44]

Okinawa was returned to Japan in 1971 under the Okinawa Reversion Agreement, which much like the San Francisco Treaty was extremely

one-sided at Japan's expense. It protected American military administrators from being held accountable for crimes under their preceding twenty-six year rule, forced Japan to pay $320 million to the United States over five years, and stated that Japan had to agree to a continued U.S. military presence as a precondition for restoration of the territory.[45] The terms were highly unpopular throughout the country and sparked violent protests.[46] While the transfer of governance from Washington to Tokyo had little impact on the U.S. Military's ability to operate, it transferred the costs of the sizeable military bases to the Japanese government ensuring an effective subsidy from Japanese tax revenues for American power projection efforts. Even after its return, U.S. personnel were effectively immune from being tried for the crimes they frequently committed against the population.[47] U.S. forces continued to survey the island's residents and particularly anti-base organizations, activists, protest groups and journalists in violation of Japanese law, with the U.S. Military widely seen on the island as the leading authority while the power of elected Okinawan officials remained negligible by comparison.[48]

Foreign Policy of a Client State: American Influence over Sino-Japanese Relations

An early sign of continued American control over Japanese foreign policy was the way it influenced relations with neighbouring China, with closer Sino-Japanese political and economic ties seen as a serious threat to U.S. dominance but strongly supported by Japan's political leadership and its business community. Japanese Prime Minister Yoshida portrayed Japanese investment as facilitating a "fifth column for democracy," in what appeared to be an attempt to avoid American opposition, although the U.S. insisted on China's complete isolation and strictly prohibited not only trade but even diplomatic ties. Yoshida nevertheless remained adamant that Japan would pursue political and economic ties with China "whether it was red or green."[49]

The prime minister's hint of defiance led John Foster Dulles, soon to be secretary of state but then still the president's special emissary for East Asian affairs, to visit Tokyo to straighten out his policy. Yoshida was presented with an ultimatum to pledge to completely isolate the People's Republic of China and instead to recognize the Guomindang-run Republic of China. The latter by then governed only Taiwan, less than 0.5 percent of Chinese territory, and was of negligible importance to Japan either strategically or economically relative to the mainland. Should Yoshida's government fail to comply, Dulles threatened, the United States Senate would refuse to ratify the San Francisco Treaty and American military rule would continue indefinitely. The threat was clear – if Japan did form ties with Beijing then there would be no Japanese state whatsoever, and the U.S. Military government would likely choose a successor to Yoshida more accommodating of their wishes. Japan acquiesced and recognized the Taipei-based Republic of China in a peace treaty in 1952 while not forming any diplomatic or economic ties with Chinese mainland – much to the chagrin of its business community and to the major detriment of Japanese economic and strategic interests.

China's own leadership had warmly welcomed a post-war Sino-Japanese partnership, with Premier Zhou Enlai informing a visiting Japanese parliamentary delegation that war between the two countries was "already in the past and we should let go the history and ensure that history is never repeated." Chairman Mao Zedong believed that not only would close ties to Japan benefit both countries economically, but that they could also potentially help to draw Japan out of America's sphere of influence through economic interdependence with China. He told a visiting Japanese parliamentary delegation regarding the departure from their wartime animosity: "You cannot be asked to apologize every day, can you?"[50] Despite both war-torn East Asian states being positioned to benefit greatly from diplomatic and economic ties, the United States successfully came between them to ensure both its near absolute influence over Japan and the near complete isolation of China. East Asia's two leading powers were thus seriously weakened while the interests of Western hegemony over the region were furthered considerably.

It was vital for American interests to ensure that it was closer to China and Japan than either was to the other, and as a result Washington would normalize relations Beijing in 1971 without notifying Tokyo beforehand. Japan could only begin to normalize relations with its neighbour once America had done so and given a green light, which it proceeded to do September 1972. Even after 1972 it was vital for the U.S. to constrain Sino-Japanese ties, with American efforts to this end focusing on emphasizing both states' historical animosities much like colonial-era strategy of divide and rule. When planning to normalize ties with Beijing, U.S. President Richard Nixon and his advisers intended that the United States portray itself to both China and Japan as a protector which could be relied on to reign in the other. As Nixon told his national security advisor Henry Kissinger in 1971 regarding how American dominance could be guaranteed: "I believe that we have got to frankly scare the bejeezus out of (China) on Japan... They have got to become convinced that a Japan... without the United States is potentially more dangerous than with the United States."[51]

Award-winning Australian journalist and expert on Sino-Japanese relations Richard McGregor wrote regarding President Nixon's plan:

> *He had a clear strategy – to stoke China's memories of the (Second World) war and with it fears of a Japanese military resurgence – to underline the benefits of keeping the United States in East Asia... Nixon's argument was in fact a familiar one at that time, portraying the presence of U.S. forces in the region as the cork in the bottle of Japan's congenital militarism. Never mind that it was at odds with the constitution that the United States had written for Japan and the peaceful path the country had set itself on in the war's aftermath... If China had been willing for practical reasons to sideline its wartime history with Japan, Nixon and Kissinger had decided they would now deliberately play it up.*

According to McGregor, Nixon had travelled in East Asia and Japan as few politicians of his era had and understood well that Japan's politicians and population were highly unwilling to play a more assertive military role. "In this sense, Nixon's warnings about a remilitarized Japan seemed confected and cynical. His real criticism of Japan was not that it was militaristic but that it wasn't militaristic enough," he concluded.[52]

For the U.S. State Department the historical animosity between China and Japan provided vital reassurance that the establishment of diplomatic

relations between them would not undermine the prevailing Western-dominated order. State Secretary Henry Kissinger highlighted that should China and Japan remain primarily concerned with the threat each posed the other then the U.S. would be the ultimate beneficiary. He noted that Japan "could become a big problem" and threaten U.S. interests just as China did should the balance of power shift – but so long as the two were in fear of one another America would remain dominant.[53] This strategy continued into the twenty-first century, with the Donald Trump administration in particular increasing arms sales to Japan while emphasizing that this was necessary due to a threat from China. President Trump simultaneously warned China that should it fail to co-operate with Washington over the Korean peninsula, it would face a "big problem" with the "warrior nation" Japan – a reference to Japan's resurgent remilitarization.[54] Just as had been the case under Nixon the U.S. sought to portray itself to China as the only country able to hold Japan in check, and to Japan as a key protector against China, with the goal perpetuating American dominance of regional order.

Keeping Japanese Foreign Policy in Line: Washington's Continuing Leverage over Tokyo

Behind Tokyo's consistent alignment of its foreign policy with Western interests were very considerable U.S. efforts to shape Japanese politics over decades, with Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) relying heavily on American backing first to determine the fates of its leaders and in subsequent decades to ensure it remained in power. Key figures in the LDP's top leadership were previously war crimes suspects pardoned under American military rule and, owing their freedom and often their exemptions from execution to the United States, went on to rule in line with American interests. Among the most prominent was Class A war crimes suspect Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi the grandfather of later Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. With the LDP in power for almost all of

Japan's post-war history, influence over the party was one of many effective means used to ensure American influence over Japanese policymaking.

The CIA provided extensive funding and other support for the LDP's election campaigns, with one agency official involved in making payments to the party interviewed by the *New York Times* and referring to American electoral interference in Japan as "the heart of darkness and I'm not comfortable talking about it, because it worked." "We had penetrations of all the cabinet agencies," another recalled. Alfred C. Ulmer Jr., who had formerly directed all the CIA's Far East operations, similarly confirmed that the agency had financed the LDP. Head of the State Department's intelligence bureau Roger Hilsman referred to these payments as "established and so routine," with former U.S. ambassador to Japan Ural Alexis Johnson also confirming these practices. CIA officials further attested to the importance of obstructing the progress of the Japanese opposition while the agency directly recruited and funded LDP party members.[55]

The importance of the LDP to U.S. interests was in part a result of the policy stances of major opposition parties, from the prominent and vehemently anti-American Japanese Communist Party in the 1950s to the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) in the 2000s. Coming to power briefly from 2009, the DPJ openly pursued the formation of closer ties to China, prioritized new regional exclusivist trade agreements with neighbours over trade with the U.S.,[56] and sought changes to the Japanese-American partnership unprecedented since U.S. military rule had ended. The LDP was often closely associated with the legacy of the Japanese Empire, from visits paid by its leaders to the Yasukuni Shrine to alleged glorification and rewriting of imperial history including glossing over major war crimes committed against Japan's neighbours. Such actions alienated potential regional partners South Korea and China in particular. The DPJ by contrast pursued policies consistent with a different aspect of the country's imperial past – namely the pan-Asian ideology under which Japan had prioritized co-operation with its neighbours and opposed Western domination of regional order.[57] The LDP's form of Japanese nationalism consistently aligned with Western interests by raising tensions with and fuelling calls for remilitarization targeting American adversaries. The DPJ's position

by contrast threatened to strengthen co-operation within East Asia to the detriment of Western hegemony.[58]

The DPJ's moves to strengthen ties with Beijing from 2009 led the *New York Times* to report with much apprehension that Washington was rapidly "losing diplomatic ground to China" in Tokyo.[59] The brevity of the DPJ administration, however, meant a pivot away from the West would be short lived despite the growing popularity at the time of a shift towards prioritizing relations with other East Asian states to revive the long stagnant Japanese economy and provide greater autonomy from Washington.[60] The DPJ's foreign policy direction in its short period in power demonstrated the importance of a dominant LDP government to U.S. and Western dominance of the region by highlighting the nature of the alternative.

Regarding U.S. influence over Japanese policymaking former Japanese Prime Minister under the DPJ, Yukio Hatoyama, in 2016 highlighted that Tokyo was unable to deviate from the American position particularly in foreign policy. When asked why Japan's peace negotiations with Russia, for example, were very heavily shaped by U.S. interests, he said:

> *We have a special relationship with America. We are close allies, and America is respected by the Japanese more than other partners... I think it represents a big problem that when making foreign policy decisions, Tokyo is always guided by the United States' approach. Japan depends on America. When Russia and Japan discussed the Kuril Islands sixty years ago,[i] Prime Minister Ichiro Hatoyama was determined to resolve the territorial dispute and was ready to accept the two [of four disputed] islands, but America strongly disagreed with this position. Washington threatened to take Okinawa [then under U.S. military rule] if Tokyo agreed to the two islands compromise. As a result, Japan failed to return the two Kuril Islands [from Russia]. Things stayed the same, and have not been resolved since. Essentially, the Kuril issue should be settled between the two countries, Japan and Russia, but it is very possible that the outcome of the [future] negotiations will also depend on the United States' position.*

i The Kuril Islands were former territories of the Japanese Empire which were captured by the USSR in the Second World War and inherited by Russia. Prime Minister Hatoyama moved to resolve the territorial dispute over the islands with Russia which would have facilitated the signing of a peace treaty and significantly improved relations. Tokyo and Moscow never concluded a peace treaty after 1945 primarily due to U.S. intervention, with Washington derailing talks over the Kurils.

Hatoyama further elaborated regarding U.S. dominance over Japan: "The Japanese media and government cannot navigate away from the Cold War attitudes... They always take America's side. Tokyo is dependent on the U.S.' views... Japan will continue to side with America and the G7[ii] countries."[61] Hatoyama's assessment was far from isolated, with his predecessor from the opposing LDP Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori stating to much the same effect that in regard to the conduct of its foreign policy: "Japan is bound by certain obligations to follow the U.S."[62]

Japanese Remilitarization in the Post-Cold War World

The potential for a remilitarized Japan able to contribute to combating Western adversaries in East Asia and beyond was pursued consistently by the United States from 1950, with Japan's armed forces even with very limited funding and low manpower caps still consistently ranked among the most capable in the world from the 1960s. From the late Cold War years into the twenty-first century Japan consistently ranked among the world's ten leading military powers, and even spending just one percent of GDP on its armed forces it fielded the third largest destroyer fleet and by the late 2010s deployed four carrier warships. Should defence spending rise to two percent, the spending target for NATO members, it could significantly shift the balance of power in East Asia to the detriment of potential challengers to Western dominance.

A major landmark in the drive for Japanese remilitarization came during the Persian Gulf War in 1990-91 when the United States formed a coalition to fight by its side against the Ba'athist Republic of Iraq and restore a client government in its neighbour Kuwait to power. Although Iraq and Kuwait were over 8,000 kilometres from Japan, and Baghdad had never threatened Tokyo or its interests, there was still a strong expectation that Western allies and client states would partake in the American-led

ii Other than Japan, the G7 was entirely comprised of Western NATO member states.

offensive. While the U.S. military hardly lacked the capabilities to neutralize Iraqi forces, the image of a coalition reigning in a 'rogue state' was far better than that of a superpower relentlessly bombing a small third world country which made Japan's endorsement of the war through participation desirable. Although Article 9 continued to provide a pretext for Japan's non-participation, with the Cold War over and a 'New World Order' declared by President George Bush expectations that the world would fall in behind the U.S. and Western world had only grown.

Facing considerable pressure, and widely portrayed in Western media self-centred and uncommitted to 'free world' values, Tokyo quickly announced that it would contribute $10 million to fund the coalition against Iraq on August 29, 1990. Facing a cold response from Washington, the Finance Ministry increased the figure to $1 billion. This was quickly supplemented by $13 billion dollars – a significant sum exceeding the annual defence budgets of all but the world's very largest militaries at the time. Under pressure for more, Tokyo announced a further $9 billion of support. Whether this was denoted in dollars or yen was unclear, with Japan announcing the contribution would be denominated in yen only for the United States to demand the payment in dollars which cost the Japanese treasury considerably more. The result demonstrated the immense benefit America and the Western world gained from their influence over Japan, which emerged as by far the leading financer of the very costly war effort fought primarily to further Western hegemonic interests - a conflict in which Tokyo would have had little reason for involvement in were it not for the nature of its relations with the U.S.[iii]

Despite Japan's colossal financial contribution, and in spite of its well-known constitutional limitations on military action, the country was still shamed for its lack of a personnel contribution. As hostilities broke out

iii As a prominent British expert and Senior Fellow of the Foreign Policy Research Institute think tank told the writer regarding the American-led operation, "the war was waged relatively cheaply. Not if you are Japanese, because the Japanese paid for it, and obviously not if you are Iraqi." The Western powers and their Arab allies which benefitted most from Iraq's defeat thus to a large extent did so at the expense of the East Asian country as a result of the considerable political pressure applied to Tokyo.

Japanese Ground Self Defence Forces Major Nozomu Yoshitomi, watching the conflict unfold live on CNN with U.S. officers, recalled being asked "how Japan could be a true U.S. ally if it hadn't sent troops." This reflected broader trends in U.S.-Japanese relations, with U.S. ambassador to Japan Michael Armacost gaining the name 'Mistua Gaiatsu' – Mr External Pressure – over the issue.[63]

To prove oneself a 'true ally' a powerful country had to commit itself to fighting the West's wars and setting itself against the West's enemies across the world, and although Japan contributed tremendous funding as well as aid in minesweeping after the fighting had ended America and its Western allies made it clear that this was insufficient. In Kuwait's official thanks after its monarchy was restored, Japan did not receive mention.

Japan's response came in the form of the United Nations Peace Cooperation Bill, which was submitted to parliament eight months after the Gulf War ended in October 1991 to provide a legal framework for Japan to contribute to military operations overseas. It aimed to organize domestic institutions for appropriate and quick co-operation with UN peacekeeping and other operations – a first and more publicly acceptable step towards the sanctioning of Japanese military deployments abroad. Opinion was divided within both Parliament and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, however, and ultimately the legislation failed to pass. The fact that the large majority of the Japanese population opposed the motion and only around 20 percent supported it, while the LDP at the time lacked a majority in the upper house, meant passage was particularly difficult. Although the bill was shelved on November 8, efforts to move towards remilitarization continued.

Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu had continuously stressed that 'checkbook diplomacy' was no longer adequate, stating in the aftermath of the Gulf War: "I think it is widely understood we have to make personnel contribution as well as financial ones."[64] The U.S. led 'New World Order' had spoken and it was Japan's turn to respond – either compliantly militarize or defy Washington. There was little real choice, but only a question as to how militarization could take place in the face of opposition by the firmly pacifist Japanese population.

Despite strong opposition Japan's Peace Cooperation Law was passed in 1992 allowing the country's armed forces to participate in overseas UN peacekeeping operations. This was widely considered a response to the country's shaming the previous year, and although the law seemed benign to many, to others it appeared only a first step towards the goal of greater interventionism abroad. As senior General Tetsuya Nishimoto of the Ground Self Defence Force said of the first UN mandated Japanese military deployment abroad, "that was the starting line."[65] He elaborated: "We learnt from the Gulf War that just sending money and not people would not earn us international respect."[66]

In 1997 Tokyo and Washington formulated the Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defence Cooperation and began work on emergency contingencies to jointly fight a war in Korea.[67] The United States had long sought to topple the North Korean government, and had very real plans for an attack in the 1990s. On June 15 1994 the White House had seriously considered initiating Operations Plan 5027, which would see cruise missiles and F-117 stealth fighters attack North Korea's Yongbyon nuclear facility likely triggering escalation, with further plans for military action continuing to be considered.[68] Japan was set contribute to any war effort in Korea.[69]

Following the passage of the Peace Cooperation Law in 1992, on July 25 2003 parliament approved the dispatch of Japanese forces to support a second American-led war effort in Iraq. This was not a UN peacekeeping mission, with the U.S.-led invasion having been strongly opposed at the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly and widely considered illegal, unprovoked and a violation of the UN Charter.[70] Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi overrode significant opposition, a no confidence vote, and a late-night filibuster to pass the unpopular legislation which gave the controversial American war effort valuable endorsement. Involvement in the Iraq War was entirely unprecedented, with no Japanese soldier having fired a gun in combat or been killed in action since 1945 while its UN peacekeepers sent abroad after 1992 were consistently assigned to reconstruction and other activities with minimal risk. To pass the Iraq Assistance Special Measures Law through parliament the law had to forbid Japanese forces' participation in active fighting, although this could hardly be guaranteed when there were no well-defined battle lines

in Iraq. American officials made it clear that Japanese forces needed to be fully armed.

Japan's path to reach a state where it could send forces to Iraq had been slowly paved over decades, with its deployment hailed by some as the 'end of an era' in Japanese history.[71] As award-winning British journalist Jonathan Watts observed at the time regarding Tokyo's deviation from adherence to Article 9: "Mr Koizumi and his predecessors have steadily eroded the significance of this document to allow the SDF [Self Defence Force] to serve as a more active ally to the U.S."[72]

Prime Minister Koizumi personally pledged Japanese backing in Iraq to President George W. Bush, but after voicing his strong support for American military action his domestic disapproval rating soared to 49 percent exceeding his 40 percent approval rating.[73] Participation in the war not only seriously undermined Japan's image as a neutral nation, but also endangered Japanese civilians around the world who as a consequence of Tokyo's intervention were made targets by international terrorist organizations. As a Japanese anti-war protestor warned in 2015: "If Japan shares the same policy beliefs with the [United] States, Japan could be targeted by terrorists just like Britain and other U.S. allies."[74] Such targeting quickly materialized,[75] with two Japanese diplomats in Iraq shot and killed in November 2003 while working to finalize preparations for the deployment. In 2004 three Japanese citizens were taken hostage by Iraqi insurgents and subjected to psychological torture, with many of the scenes notably not shown by Japanese media. The insurgents threatened to burn them alive unless Japan withdrew its forces.[76] Although they were eventually released under unclear circumstances,[77] other kidnappings and killings occurred including the capture and beheading of backpacker Shosei Koda in 2004.[78] The cost of being forced to abandon pacifism and neutrality was high.

Japan's support for unilateral Western military interventionism conflicted with its long-nurtured image as a neutral supporter of international consensus and peaceful resolution, which was particularly apparent as the United States invaded Iraq without UN or even NATO support. A high-ranking Japanese diplomat thus observed: "As is obvious from the case of the Iraq War, the United States is prepared to act in its capacity as sole world superpower." He went on to write:

> *Unlike the days when coordination among Western powers aligned behind the United States was absolutely essential... today broad international coordination is not always compatible with the Japan-U.S. alliance, no matter how fundamental both of them may be in shaping Japan's foreign policy. This incompatibility was inherent in the question of whether or not Japan should support the U.S.- and UK-led military action against Iraq, because that action did not enjoy the full consent of the international community... It the context of their [U.S.-Japan] bilateral alliance, it is difficult to imagine Japan and the United States taking divergent approaches in their basic security policies in a situation such as the conflict in Iraq.* [79]

Supporting an American-led occupation achieved illegally and directly against a UN consensus, Japan's long cultivated image of pacifism, moderation and support for international consensus were much diminished. Tokyo demonstrated that it lacked either the freedom not to fight of the pacifist era, or the freedom to choose when and against whom to fight and how to conduct its foreign policy as in the Imperial era. It now had neither the dignified independence and self-determination of the imperial era nor the peace, security and low defence spending of the post-war years. This shift was far from popular domestically, as professor Tsuneo Akaha noted in his book on Japan-U.S. relations and the Iraq War:

> *It should be noted that the Japanese government's decision to support the U.S. military action in the absence of international consensus was met with strong disapproval among the Japanese public, who remained unconvinced that all peaceful means had been exhausted before the military action was taken. Japan's popular pacifism, the geographical distance between Iraq and Japan, and Japanese unfamiliarity with the Iraqi situation were behind the public's reluctance to endorse the U.S.-led military attack on Iraq. The Japanese government's alliance realism vis-à-vis the United States had trumped the wisdom of the Japanese people.* [80]

Closely coinciding with its intervention in Iraq, Japan began planning an aircraft carrier program for maritime power projection which came to be highly symbolic of the gradual erosion of Japanese pacifism. Laying down its first carrier in 2006, the 19,000 ton Hyuga Class helicopter carriers were commissioned from 2009 followed by the larger 27,000 ton Izumo Class aircraft carriers from 2015. Although officially the carriers were called 'helicopter destroyers' - much as Japanese tanks had been called 'special vehicles' – the Izumo Class were purpose built to deploy

fighter jets[81] which it did from October 2021.[82] While commissioning a dedicated aircraft carrier directly would have been too sudden a deviation from Article 9, the LDP government managed to achieve it in gradual stages. The approach to obtaining a carrier capability mirrored the wider approach to remilitarize Japan through small and often seemingly benign steps – slowly killing Japan's pacifism much like the death of a frog in slowly boiled water. It was particularly symbolic that as Japan was unable to deploy a fighter air wing from its carriers, the air wings were comprised of U.S. Marine F-35B stealth jets flown and operated by the U.S. Military from Japanese ships – the first fighters to fly from Japanese carriers since 1945.[83]

From the early 2010s as the United States faced growing challenges to its military dominance in East Asia, and implemented the Pivot to Asia (see Chapter 12) largely as a response, accelerating Japan's militarization became increasingly critical to American and Western interests. In July 2014 as the Obama administration's pivot began to gain momentum, the LDP forwarded legislation calling for a reinterpretation of Article 9 to allow Japan to intervene abroad militarily to defend allied states. The legislation was passed, although by means viewed by many as illegitimate as Prime Minister Shinzo Abe circumvented the constitutional amendment procedure and made the change without parliamentary debate, public approval or a vote.[84] In the latest of multiple references by Japanese officials to the substantial influence of Western post-Gulf War pressure, Prime Minister's Abe foreign policy advisor Tomohiko Taniguchi stated regarding the significance of the legislation that allowed Japan to more actively support the U.S. Military: "For the first time, we are just about to be able to exercise collective defence with the U.S. and others, so the feeling is we have finally been able to get the [Gulf War] burden off our shoulders."[85] In 2015 Japan began its first joint offensive drills with the United States to train for amphibious assaults and capturing of strategic islands – an unprecedentedly offensive role. The country three years later created its own marine corps specialized in offensive amphibious warfare.[86] In 2016 reports emerged of European efforts to encourage Japan to join NATO as the alliance's first Asian member, to which Prime Minister Abe responded it may be possible in the future.[87]

Opposition to the 2014 legislation on military intervention was predominantly based on the argument that it would lead to Japan being involved in external conflicts to support Western military adventurism across the world. As opposition politician Taro Yamamoto claimed: "If this legislation passes, we will absolutely be caught up in illegal American wars." Mizuho Fukushima of the Social Democratic opposition party noted that such legislation could lead Japan to become "accomplices to murder" by supporting American wars. The belief that Japan's government was unable to refuse U.S. requests to deploy its military however Washington required was widespread and fuelled opposition to the legislation. As Tsuneo Watanabe, senior fellow at the Tokyo Foundation policy research group, concluded: "It's partly about public distrust of Japan's own government. People think Japanese leaders are too weak to say no to the U.S."[88]

In May 2017 Prime Minister Abe sought to build on the legislation passed in 2014 by setting a 2020 deadline for passing further revisions to Article 9 to recognize the country's military.[89] He stated to this effect: "Now is precisely the time to unchain ourselves from the post-World War II regime, and that includes rewriting the Constitution."[90] While Japan had every right to alter its constitution and pursue militarization, particularly considering that Article 9 had been imposed under foreign military occupation, constitutional amendments facilitating remilitarization were widely seen to erode rather than increase sovereignty and self-determination. As noted by the *New York Times*[91] and Japanese papers such as *Asahi Shimbun*[92] among others at the time, the vast majority of Japan's population supported Article 9. Furthermore remilitarization, far from being carried out to free Japan, was pursued primarily for the benefit of Western interests at Washington's urging. The "perfect time to unchain ourselves" Abe referred to coincided with the time the U.S. more than ever needed a remilitarized Japan to support it against an unprecedentedly unfavourable balance of power in East Asia. Victor Cha, former director for Asian affairs at the White House's National Security Council, had thus noted: "As Japan extends its security profile to become more of a global player, it is doing so wholly within the context of a U.S.-Japanese alliance."[93] As one Japanese anti-militarization protestor similarly observed, "they [the United States] can't bear all the military costs on their own, so they want Japan to

share the costs. My impression is that Japan is legislating the security bills in response to the U.S.' request."[94]

As with many Western client states in East Asia and beyond, Japan had remained 'free but not free' having never fully regained independence and from the 2000s increasingly relied on to shoulder the burden of maintaining the Western-dominated order in the Pacific. The stronger Japan's military become and the fewer restraints put on its actions, the greater an asset the United States would have in the region. When the United States believed it to be imperative that Japan militarize, Washington's influence ensured this could not be opposed regardless of public opinion.

Despite unwavering support from Japan, the U.S. consistently aligned its foreign policy more closely with its Western partners over Tokyo. A notable example was the revelation in 2015 that the U.S. National Security Agency was not only spying on Japan, but sharing this information with Canada, Britain, New Zealand and Australia. Targets ranged from cabinet officials and major banks to Japanese firms that competed with Western economic interests, as well as "content of a confidential prime ministerial briefing that took place at Shinzo Abe's official residence."[95] Wikileaks founder Julian Assange commented: "The lesson for Japan is this: do not expect a global surveillance superpower [the United States and its Western allies] to act with honour or respect. There is only one rule: there are no rules."[96]

The presence of tens of thousands of American military personnel in Japan for over three quarters of a century made the country indefinitely a staging ground for U.S. military operations across East Asia. Some of these included the CIA's war in Indonesia, the Chinese Civil War, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the 'Pivot to Asia' in the 2010s. In the 1950s the Korean War served as a key pretext to counter widespread Japanese calls for the removal of U.S. bases,[97] with provision of security against the Soviet Union then used as a pretext to make the presence of U.S. forces indefinite. While new generations raised when anti-American sentiments had faded were increasingly accustomed to the presence of U.S. forces, having never known anything else, the existence of North Korea outside Western control provided a new pretext for America's continued military presence after the Soviet collapse. Former CIA agent and ambassador to South Korea and China James Lilley reportedly stated to this effect: "If North Korea did not exist, we would have to create it to give us the

excuse to keep our Seventh Fleet in Japan after the end of the Cold War."[98] So long as there was some slight opposition to American power, it could be taken as a new reason to maintain U.S. bases. In accordance with their importance, bases in Japan were named by the Council on Foreign Relations as the "anchor of the U.S. security role in Asia."[99] Reflecting his country's new role in regional affairs, Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone in 1983 referred to Japan as the United States' "unsinkable aircraft carrier in the Pacific" - a relationship which it was crucial to perpetuate for Western hegemony in East Asia to be sustained."[100]

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CHAPTER 10

Economic War on Asia: Crushing the Region's Rising Economies

> A market is not politically neutral; its existence creates economic power which one actor can use against another.[1]
>
> – Robert Gilpin

The 'Position of Disparity' and Asia's Rise

While China's economic rise placed it increasingly at the centre of U.S. foreign policy attentions from the early 2010s, the East Asian region's unique prevalence of non-Western high-tech economies and fast-growing economic prosperity gained it considerable Western attention thirty years prior after the end of the Cold War. With the Soviet challenge to Western dominance quashed, and Western hegemony relying on the disparity between Western wealth and technological advancement and the general poverty and underdevelopment of the non-Western world, rising East Asian economies were increasingly seen as threats. The possibility that the region, particularly countries outside the Western sphere of influence such as China, but also Western-aligned states such as South Korea, could bridge gaps in high-tech and living standards with and economically surpass the West was unfavourable to the interest of sustaining a world order based on Western primacy.

The need to prevent non-Western countries from bridging the gap in development was most famously referred to in the early Cold War years by scholar and Chair of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff George

Kennan as the goal of maintaining a "position of disparity" separating the wealth of the West from the poverty of Asia.[2] As a key Policy Planning Staff report, marked top secret but since declassified, stated: "Disparity [in wealth] is particularly great as between ourselves and the peoples of Asia. In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our national security."[3] Development and economic modernization in East Asia, although necessary in the context of the Cold War to strengthen Western-aligned states against common adversaries, was a potential threat towards which the West was less tolerant after the Cold War ended.

East Asia was long seen to have the greatest potential to challenge and eclipse the West economically and in high tech. As professor of international relations at the University of London, Michael Cox, was one of many to observe: "The region overall appears to be economically 'blessed,' not so much in terms of raw materials but with other, more intangible, but important assets, including a culture of hard work, a system of entrepreneurial values, a plentiful supply of labour, a huge reservoir of capital, and a set of political and economic structures that allow the state to play a critical role in engineering successful economic outcomes."[4] This had significant geopolitical consequences as well as economic ones. As noted in 2017 by chief foreign affairs columnist for the *Financial Times* Gideon Rachman the root cause of the West's diminishing ability to shape international affairs was "the extraordinary economic development in [East] Asia," which led to a "long run shift in global economic power."[5] HSBC's global chief economist Stephen King similarly argued in his work, 'Losing Control; The Emerging Threats to Western Prosperity,' that the rise of Asian economies, regardless of their political orientations, was a fundamental threat to Western power and primacy.[6] Allowing Asian economies to rise too far thus threatened the 'position of disparity' which had for centuries been key to perpetuating Western-dominated world order.

Japan's restoration as a developed high-tech economy, which gained American support to help counter China and the USSR, had been followed by the modernization of the 'Asian Tiger' economies Hong Kong,

Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan. By the mid-1990s the Tigers' successes were followed by the less developed but fast-rising and more populous countries of Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand.[7] Just weeks before crisis hit in 1996, East Asian economies were hailed as the success stories of 1990s with Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and the four Tigers receiving considerable foreign investment.

In response to the growing challenge to Western power posed by East Asia's economic rise, the Western position at the centre of the global financial system was leveraged to destabilize regional economies. Western dominance of international finance was undisputed, ranging from the West's near monopoly on the global reserve currencies to its control of the world's leading financial markets which placed it at the centre of what was often termed the 'wiring' of the global financial system. Dominance of the Bretton Woods institutions the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank – both of which were conceived in a conference in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, in the United States – was another key asset. Both had considerable influence over the global economy and were based in Washington D.C., with the former consistently headed by a European and the latter by an American. Despite names indicating an internationalist orientation, both consistently served Western interests and at the time had no alternatives from the non-Western world. With emerging Asian economies integrated into the Western centred global financial system, and relying on Western dominated institutions for consultations and loans, they proved highly vulnerable.

To take South Korea, one of the region's most prominent economic success stories, as an example, in the mid-1990s it and other regional governments came under pressure from the International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization (WTO) to restructure their economies. Western countries and institutions pressed for financial liberalization and deregulation, with the Western dominated Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) making further demands that Seoul dispense with controls on capital flows into and out from the country.[8] The country was also pressured to privatize key state-owned firms.

The South Korean government met Western demands half way, with barriers to the financial sector and capital controls lifted but national firms

still remaining off limits to foreign ownership and key state-owned companies not privatized. The lifting of capital controls, however, left South Korea open to speculative attacks on its economy which would be used to considerable effect.[9] Director of Development Studies at Cambridge University, Ha Joon Chang, and National University of Singapore Professor, Shin Jang Sup, stated in their study of the ROK's economy: "The post-1993 financial liberalization in Korea was critical in generating the current crisis as, for the first time in the country's history, it instituted a very substantial, if not a complete, capital account liberalization." This incentivized borrowers to contract short-term loans from abroad and left the market vulnerable to speculation while failing to strengthen the supervision system.[10] With capital controls lifted colossal sums of money flowed into Korean markets unregulated. Similar trends were observed in Malaysia, Thailand and other regional economies from around the same time also primarily due to external pressure to deregulate.

Nobel laureate in economics and chief economist at the Roosevelt Institute Joseph Stiglitz was among those to conclude that the rapid market liberalization, primarily the sudden deregulation of capital flows by lifting capital controls, was the primary cause of East Asia's economic crisis. He emphasized that these were the exact policies that the U.S. Treasury and IMF had strongly advocated and pressed countries such as South Korea to adopt, which then left them vulnerable to speculative attacks.[11] Former Oxford University Foreign Service Program director and international relations professor Rodney Bruce Hall similarly argued that the primary cause of the East Asian economic crisis was an IMF attempt at "demolition" of the Asian development model, with removal of capital controls facilitating concerted speculative attacks.[12]

In 1996 Western brokers had invested approximately $100 billion in South Korean markets, but within weeks this suddenly reversed with investment in 1997 turning to negative $20 billion. The discrepancy of $120 billion could not be explained by any change in the economic or political situation, and appeared to be purely speculative.[13] South Korea and the other very different Asian economies that were similarly targeted all had in common only that their economic rises were detrimental to Western interests.

The sudden crisis was referred to as 'Asian Flu,' later 'the Asia Contagion,' with no apparent tangible cause. The Thai baht, Malaysian ringgit, Indonesian rupiah and South Korean won all lost tremendous value effectively overnight in what appeared to be a wave of speculative attacks, the result of which *The Economist* called the "a destruction of savings on a scale more usually associated with a full-scale war."[14] It became increasingly evident that the crisis was caused not by shortcomings in East Asian economies themselves, but rather by decisions made at the heart of global finance in the West. As a *Financial Times* editorial noted: "The Asian crisis showed the world how even the most successful countries could be brought to their knees by a sudden outflow of capital. People were outraged at how the whims of secretive hedge funds could apparently cause mass poverty on the other side of the world."[15]

'We Need More Bad News': Exacerbating Crisis

As currencies rapidly lost value East Asian governments quickly drained their foreign currency reserves to prop them up. In South Korea millions responded with donations of gold, jewellery, medals, trophies, wedding rings and other valuables, with the *BBC* reporting: "The campaign has exceeded the organizers' expectations, with people from all walks of life rallying around in a spirit of self-sacrifice. According to the organizers ten tons of gold were collected in the first two days of the campaign. But perhaps the most extraordinary aspect of the campaign is not the sums involved, but the willingness of the Korean people to make personal sacrifices to help save their economy."[16] Over 200 tons of gold were collected – enough to drive down the world gold price.[17] The sheer amount of capital available at Western financial institutions, however, meant this could barely slow the inevitable collapse once the decision to make speculative attacks had been made. With capital controls lifted and markets unregulated $600 billion quickly disappeared from the markets of the affected countries.[18]

The power to determine the fates of East Asian economies lay primarily in Western hands. In 1994 a Mexican currency crisis had been ended quickly when the U.S. Treasury swiftly allowed for large loans to the country sufficient to almost immediately stop the destructive speculative cycle. This succeeded despite the crisis having been sparked much more by genuine economic issues than speculation, in contrast to that in East Asia, since Mexico's fall, unlike East Asian economies, was not in line with Western interests. Thus not only were no similar moves made to support the Asian markets, but the leading names in Western finance presented a unified message not to help or lend to East Asia. Nobel Prize winning American economist Milton Friedman made a rare appearance in his mid-80s on *CNN* to say he opposed any form of bailout and that, unlike Mexico, Asian markets should be left to correct themselves.[19] Jay Pelosky, one of Morgan Stanley's primary emerging market strategists, made it clear to a conference in Los Angeles hosted by the Milken Institute that the U.S. Treasury and IMF should do nothing to lessen the East Asian crisis. "What we need now in Asia is more bad news. Bad news is needed to keep stimulating the adjustment process," he said.[20] In November 1997 at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit in Vancouver, four months after the crisis began, President Bill Clinton enraged his East Asian counterparts by dismissing to the crisis as "A few little glitches in the road."[21] The Western position led several economists, such as Toyoo Gyohten and Hajime Shinohara of the Japanese Institute for Monetary Affairs, to realize the need for an Asian monetary fund independent of the West able to support bailouts as the U.S. had done in Mexico.[22]

The South Korean, Malaysian and Thai economies had developed under strong protectionist policies under which foreigners were prohibited from owning land or buying key national firms. Sectors such as transportation and energy were kept publicly owned, while many imports from Japan and Western countries were discouraged and import substitution encouraged. There was thus much to gain for Western finance from leveraging the crisis to press for a lifting of protectionist policies and thereby gain greater access to Asian economies.

Morgan Stanley strategist Jay Pelosky observed regarding the benefits the crisis could yield in terms of allowing foreign capital to purchase key

East Asian firms at extremely low costs: "I'd like to see closure of companies and asset sales... Asset sales are very difficult; typically owners don't want to sell unless they're forced to. Therefore, we need more bad news to continue to put the pressure on these corporates to sell their companies." Pelosky strongly advocated withholding support for Asian markets, which would result in considerable economic gains for Western firms and financial markets.[23] If the crisis was left to worsen all foreign currency would be drained from the targeted economies, leaving Asian firms unable to operate and forcing them either to sell themselves or to close down.

The International Monetary Fund played key role in ensuring there was "more bad news" as Pelosky had referred to it. Japan's top international finance bureaucrat at the time, Eisuke Sakakibara, noted regarding the IMF's performance in the region: "Absurdly, they forced fiscal consolidation on countries at a time of crisis. They shut down financial institutions – a measure that will squeeze the economy. They also introduced capital liberalization, forcing countries to move from a pegged exchange system to a flexible one. If you do that at a time of crisis, the outcome is obvious – it will cause the currency to collapse. All these measures exacerbated the Asian financial crisis." Worsening the currency crisis appeared to be the intention of the IMF, with the results of its actions being highly predictable.[24]

Canadian journalist, award-winning author and political analyst Naomi Klein stated in her analysis: "What few were willing to accept to admit at the time is that, while the IMF certainly failed the people of Asia, it did not fail Wall Street – far from it. The hot money may have been spooked by the IMF's drastic measures, but the large investment houses and multinational firms were emboldened." As a result, she noted, Western capital "now understood that as a result of the IMF's 'adjustments,' pretty much everything in Asia was now up for sale – and the more the market panicked, the more desperate Asian companies would be to sell, pushing their prices through the floor." Klein highlighted that the IMF appeared to have intended to deepen the crisis to benefit Western interests.[25]

British Professor David Harvey noted in his own study of the crisis regarding how the West's position at the centre of international finance allowed it to 'liquidize' potential economic rivals:

> *Liquidation can come by a variety of means... IMF austerity programs implemented at the behest of the U.S. Treasury can be used with equally destructive effect as physical force. The distinctive role of U.S. financial institutions and the U.S. Treasury backed by the IMF in visiting a violent devaluation of assets throughout East and South-East Asia, creating mass unemployment and effectively rolling back years of social and economic progress on the part of huge populations in that region, is a case in point.*[26]

Regarding incentives for the United States in particular to bring ruin to the Asian economies, Harvey noted that the purpose was to eliminate a threat to its place as the centre of the world economy stating: "It is hard to imagine that the U.S. would peacefully accept and adapt to the phenomenal growth of East Asia and recognize... that we are in the midst of a major transition towards Asia as the hegemonic centre of global power. It is unlikely that the U.S. will go quietly and peacefully into that goodnight."[27]

Speculative attacks on East Asian economies paved the way to their reshaping in line Western interests. As Jose Pinera, senior fellow at the highly influential Cato Institute think tank, said "the day of reckoning has arrived" – referring to the fall of East Asian economies "the fall of a second Berlin Wall."[28] The Western world had absorbed the Soviet Bloc into its economic influence from 1989-92, with the subsequent Western-directed remaking of the Russian economy resulting in severe crisis that killed millions, increased poverty by 2666 percent, bankrupt 80 percent of farms, closed 70,000 state factories and almost halved GDP in the 1990s. This ensured the country could never in the foreseeable future re-emerge as a peer level challenger to Western power, while enriching the Western world tremendously and leaving the Russian population destitute.[29] With the Soviet Bloc neutralised rising East Asian economies became the new leading challenge to Western primacy and thus a priority target, with targeted economies facing extreme and sudden GDP contractions exceeding levels usually seen in major wars.[30]

The IMF responded to the Asian crisis only after the worst appeared to be over, and did so with a long list of demands for economic restructuring. The crisis, it appeared, was not something to be averted but rather an opportunity which could be exploited by imposing further liberalization on Asian markets. Chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve Alan Greenspan,

perhaps the world's most influential economic policymaker, stated regarding the changes taking place: "The current crisis is likely to accelerate the dismantling in many Asian countries of the remnant of a system with large elements of government directed investment."[31] Malaysia was a notable exception, and by refusing to comply with the advice of Western institutions to restructure and deregulate it was spared the worst of the crisis. As Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said, he should not have to "destroy the economy in order that it should become better"[32] as others were doing at great cost to their peoples' wellbeing. He highlighted Western pressure "to turn all Asian economies [into] Anglo- Saxon laissez faire market economies," accusing the World Bank and IMF of being instruments of the Western neo-colonialism, and Western finance and currency traders of artificially devaluing Asian currencies "so the so-called East Asian economic tigers suddenly turn into meowing cats."[33]

Many lawmakers in other targeted Asian states suggested reinstating capital controls as Malaysia had done, although with Prime Minister Mahathir portrayed in the West as a dangerous economic extremist Western sources and particularly the IMF strongly advised against following its successful example.[34] Other East Asian governments had by then in response to the initial wave of crisis largely outsourced their decision-making to the IMF in return for promises of loans. As Thai Deputy Premier Supachai Panitchpakdi said at the time, while its IMF drafted economic reforms were passed by four emergency degrees to avoid parliamentary debate: "We have lost our autonomy, our ability to determine our macroeconomic policy. This is unfortunate."[35] The IMF thus acted to leverage the crisis to further accordance with Western interests.

Even IMF's own internal audit by the IMF Independent Evaluation Office criticized the fund's handling of the crisis, stating "crisis should not be used as an opportunity to seek a long agenda of reforms just because leverage is high, irrespective of how justifiable they may be on merits." It referred to the stringent structural adjustment demands as "ill advised," "broader than seemed necessary" and "not critical to resolving the crisis." Regarding IMF's efforts to prevent Asian nations from reinstating capital controls, the audit concluded: "If it was heresy to suggest that financial markets were not distributing world capital in a rational and stable way,

then it was a mortal sin to contemplate" capital controls. Capital controls were not, the audit stated, dismissed on the basis of their merits or lack of them, but the IMF was determined to prevent their imposition regardless.[36] The highly critical report by the Independent Evaluation Office did not emerge until 2003, by which time it was far too late for Asian countries affected to reconsider their near unconditional acceptance of IMF structural adjustments and economic reforms.

The first stage of the IMF reform process was to strip countries of active state participation in their economies. What was removed was nothing less than the "trade and investment protectionism and activist state intervention that were the key ingredients of the 'Asian miracle'," according to political scientist Professor Walden Bello.[37] This left Asian economies almost entirely at the mercy of Western capital. Former Governor of the Bank of Israel and Vice Chairman of the Federal Reserve System's Board of Governors, Stanley Fischer, highlighted that the IMF's own investigation concluded that the crises in Korea and Indonesia were unrelated to government overspending, but that it went ahead to enforce severe and sudden austerity measures regardless. State involvement in Asian economies was severely restricted not as a response to economic necessity or stimuli, or at the request of the public, but rather as an external imposition to further Western interests. It had nothing to do with helping Asia recover. One *New York Times* reporter wrote that the IMF's actions while working to reform Asia's economies were "like a heart surgeon who, in the middle of an operation, decided to do some work on the lungs and kidneys, too."[38]

Singaporean political and economic analyst Cheong Yip Seng noted in 2010 that the policies advocated by the IMF and other Western institutions for Asia were utterly hypocritical considering their response to the West's own financial crisis in 2008. He wrote:

> *The West – including the International Monetary Fund and World Bank – prescribed bitter medicine. They extolled traditional free market principles: Asia should raise interest rates to support sagging currencies, while state spending, debt, subsidies should be cut drastically. Banks and companies in trouble should be left to fail, there should be no bail-outs. South Korea, Thailand, Indonesia were pressured into swallowing the bitter medicine... Western credibility was torn to shreds when the financial tsunami struck Wall Street [2008]. Shamelessly abandoning the policy prescriptions they imposed on Asia,*

> *they decided their banks and companies like General Motors were too big to fail. How many Asian countries could have been spared severe pain if they had ignored the IMF?*[39]

The institutions pressed for austerity and a selling off of firms in Asia with devastating effect, but oversaw generous bailouts to save Western firms the following decade. Market principles thus were not applied consistently, but however best suited Western interests.

The IMF and a Restructuring of Asian Economies to Suit Western Interests

Founded in the United States, headquartered in Washington D.C., and with managing directors who had all been Westerners, the IMF did much to further Western interests throughout the Asian crisis. During negotiations between the IMF and the South Korean government David Lipton, U.S. Treasury Undersecretary for International Affairs, flew to Seoul and checked into the Hilton where negotiations were taking place. He attended to ensure that the interests of U.S. firms were represented and reflected in the final agreements. As *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal* economic reporter Paul Blustein wrote, Lipton's presence at the negotiations was "a visible manifestation of the influence the United States wields over IMF policy."[40]

In line with Western interests the IMF privatized basic services all of which were unprecedentedly made available to be bought by Western capital. Central banks were made independent and workforces were made more flexible. Korea was forced to lift laws protecting its workers against mass layoffs,[41] and the IMF set strict layoff targets. The banking sector was forced to shed 30 percent of its workers.[42] A year beforehand South Korea's unionized workforce held immense influence, but following the crisis the government was forced to crack down on them in accordance with Western demands made through the IMF. Social spending was also reduced significantly.

In South Korea's December 1997 presidential elections two of the four leading candidates ran on anti-IMF platforms, to which the IMF responded by refusing to release the money it had loaned, for which Seoul had already made extensive concessions, unless an extra condition was met. All four main candidates had to pledge in writing that they would stick to the deal with the IMF if they won – meaning no return to greater government involvement in the economy or to protection against foreign interests. With the country held to ransom all candidates had little choice but to sign.[43] South Koreans could vote, but they could not have a say in the most critical issues affecting the economy. The day of the signing was fittingly known as the country's National Humiliation Day.[44]

Within a year the economies of Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines and South Korea had been deeply restructured under the IMF in line with Western interests. *Financial Times* commentator Martin Wolf referred to this as "the humiliating dictation by IMF officials operating under the thumb of the U.S. Treasury."[45] IMF reforms appeared to only diminish market confidence in East Asian economies – the reasoning being that if they needed such severe changes as the IMF was imposing its situation had to be truly dire indeed. While the IMF Independent Evaluation Office later confirmed restructuring was highly excessive and was wholly unrelated to any inefficiencies in these economies, this was not how investors perceived the massive restructuring program. As the IMF had insisted on removing capital controls, the only form of defence against the destructive effects of such speculation, money again flowed out. South Korea was losing $1 billion every day and its debt was downgraded to junk. As Colombia University Professor Jeffrey Sachs observed: "Instead of dousing the fire, the IMF in effect screamed 'fire' in the theatre," turning crisis into outright catastrophe for which the targeted East Asian populations would pay the price.[46]

24 million people in the affected countries lost their jobs, and in Indonesia the unemployment rate tripled. In South Korea 300,000 workers lost their jobs every month, largely due to the IMF's demands to lay off workers which proved to be totally unnecessary. South Korea's unemployment rate nearly tripled while its middle class all but collapsed. 63.7 percent of South Koreans were considered middle class in 1996, but by 1999

this had fallen to just 38.4 percent. 20 million people across the affected countries fell into poverty during this period.[47]

The extent of human suffering was greater than statics showed, with consequences more commonly associated with famine or total war. As the middle classes across the affected countries fell, the poor fell further. Many rural families in the Philippines and South Korea were left with little choice but to sell their daughters to human traffickers, who were sold into slavery in Australia, Europe and the United States.[48] Without firing a shot the not only their riches but their women as well had been looted. In Thailand public health officials reported that child prostitution had increased by 20 percent in just one year – the year following the IMF reforms.[49] The same trend was observed in the Philippines.[50] Again it would be primarily Westerners who would benefit from a more desperate population and resulting child sex industry, with the prime destinations for trafficking being synonymous with the Western world.[51] The BBC similarly reported a rise in sex tourism and child sex tourism in the region, largely catering to Western clients, occurring as a direct result of the Asian financial crisis.[52]

Khun Bunjan, a Thai community leader, said when interviewed on the impacts of the crisis: "We the poor pay the price... even our limited access to schools and health is now beginning to disappear." Her husband had lost his factory job, and she had been forced to send her children to work as scavengers. Young women increasingly turned to prostitution catering to foreign clients, while drug dealing became increasingly attractive to the now destitute young men.[53] It was thus highly ironic that when U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited Thailand in March 1999 and expressed "strong support" for the severe austerity policies imposed by IMF, she at the same time scolded the Thai people for turning to prostitution and "dead end drugs." She emphasized how it was "essential that girls not be exploited and abused and exposed to AIDS. It's very important to fight back," while promoting the very same policies that forced them into such vices. Albright also lobbied hard for multi-billion dollar sales of fighter jets to the crisis-hit country.[54]

As a result of the IMF's adjustments everything in affected economies was available for sale, from the daughters of poor families to national firms and key public infrastructure. The worse the crisis, the more Asian firms

would be forced to close or sell. As Jay Pelosky had said, Asia needed "more bad news to continue to put pressure on these corporates to sell their companies."[55] After the crisis reached its worst, mass purchases at prices unthinkable before 1997 began.

Former U.S. Undersecretary of Commerce Jeffrey Garten had predicted that when the IMF was finished with Asia "there is going to be a significantly different Asia, and it will be an Asia in which American firms have achieved much deeper penetration and much greater access."[56] The *New York Times* dubbed the crash "the world's biggest going-out-of-business sale,"[57] with *Business Week* referring to a "business-buying bazaar."[58] Skilled workforces, consumer bases, and brand value built up over decades, were particularly coveted and, after falling into Western hands would either be absorbed, broken up and downsized, or shut down completely to eliminate competition. The Korean giant Samsung, for example, was broken up and sold for parts with S. C. Johnson & Son taking its pharmaceuticals arm, Volvo its heavy industry division and General Electric its lighting division. Daewoo's car division previously valued at $6 billion was sold to General Motors for just $400 million.[59] The large Korean electricity and gas company LG Energy was bought up by the British Powergen. Other prime beneficiaries among Western firms were: Coca Cola, Seagram's, Hewlett-Packard, Nestle, Interbrew and Novartis, Carrefour, Tesco and Ericsson.[60]

Observing Asian economies' tremendous losses and the West's similarly substantial gains, British economists Robert Wade and Frank Veneroso predicted that "the combination of massive devaluations, IMF-pushed financial laterizations, and IMF-facilitated recovery may even precipitate the biggest peacetime transfer of assets from domestic to foreign owners in the past fifty years anywhere in the world."[61] Indeed, why invade East Asia to acquire its wealth and forestall its growth with armies as in imperial times when economic warfare achieved many of the same results at almost no cost to the aggressor.

Western financial institutions were also major beneficiaries. Two months after the IMF reached its final deal in South Korea *The Wall Street Journal* published an article titled: 'Wall Street Scavenging in Asia-Pacific.' It detailed how Morgan Stanley among others had "dispatched armies of bankers to the Asia-Pacific region to scout for brokerage firms, asset

management firms and even banks that they can snap up at bargain prices. The hunt for Asian acquisitions is urgent because many U.S. securities firms, led by Merrill Lynch & Co. and Morgan Stanley, have made overseas expansion their priority."[62] AIG bought Bangkok Investment for a small fraction of its prior worth. JP Morgan bought a significant stake in the Korean car giant KIA Motors. Merrill Lynch bought both Japan's Yamaichi Securities[63] and Thailand's largest securities firm Phatra Thanakit.[64] Travelers Ground and Salomon Smith Barney bought several firms including Korea's largest textile company.[65] The Carlyle Group became a major shareholder in one of Korea's largest banks, as well as buying Daewoo's telecoms division and one of Korea's largest high-tech firms SsangYong Information & Communications.[66]

East Asian governments were also forced to sell off publicly owned assets at very low prices. To make a case for the U.S. Congress authorizing billions to the IMF to help remake Asian economies, the U.S. trade representative Charlene Barshefsky emphasized that the IMF would force Asian countries to "accelerate privatization of certain key sectors – including energy, transportation, utilities and communications." This was put forward as a positive step not because it would help Asia to recover, but because it would "create new business opportunities for U.S. firms."[67]

Privatizations across the region benefitted Western firms tremendously, making acquisitions at a small fraction of their pre-crisis values. Bechtel bought the water and sewage systems in Eastern Manilla,[68] Motorola took full control over South Korea's appeal telecoms.[69] New York-based energy giant Sithe took a large stake in Thailand's public gas company Cogeneration. Indonesia's state-owned water systems were split between Britain's Thames Waters and France's Lyonnaise des Eaux. A massive Indonesian government power plant project was taken by Canada's Westcoast Energy. British Telecom purchased large stakes in Malaysian and South Korean postal services. Bell Canada acquired a large part of Korea's Hansol personal communications services operator.[70] These were but a few of the many Western acquisitions of East Asian firms, many of the most ludicrous which were publicly owned and unavailable for sale before 1997.

Fallout and Lessons From Crisis

Professor David Harvey noted regarding how the United States, having played a leading role in orchestrating the Asian crisis, quickly emerged as a key beneficiary:

> *Various bouts of devaluation and destruction of capital were visited, usually through the good graces of IMF structural adjustment programs... The hedge funds' attack upon the Thai and Indonesian currencies in 1997, backed up by the savage deflationary policies demanded by the IMF, drove even viable concerns into bankruptcy throughout East and South-East Asia. Unemployment and impoverishment were the result for millions of people. That crisis also conveniently sparked a flight to the dollar, confirming Wall Street's dominance and generating an amazing boom in asset values for the affluent in the United States.*[71]

It became increasingly apparent that deregulation in emerging economies such as those in East Asia was strongly in line with Western interests, despite such reforms being promoted as aligning with the best interests of the peoples and countries in which they were implemented. The *American Interest* was among those to highlight that it brought about "co-option and an evolutionary change in values."[72] Countries which paid the price for reforming along Western lines, in particular South Korea, had seen deregulation and neoliberal reforms strongly advocated by an elite of Western-educated economists who served as an effective fifth column from within that complemented external Western government and IMF pressure. As Ha Joon Chang, Director of Development Studies at Cambridge University, and National University of Singapore Professor Jang Sup Shin stated in their study of South Korea's economy regarding its liberalization:

> *What was decisive in this process was the increasing conversion of the intellectual elite, especially the bureaucratic elite, to Neo-Liberalism. The increasing number of elite bureaucrats and academics who got advanced degrees from the U.S. at the height of its Neo-Liberal revolution meant that there were more and more people inside the government who were convinced of the virtues of the free market and saw developmentalism as a 'backward' 'mistaken' ideology. It needs to be added that in this ideological battle, the*

Neo-Liberals were critically helped by the ideological dominance of the Anglo-American academia and media at the world level.

This pressure from Western-educated Koreans was an invaluable asset to external actors which were pressing the country to change course and adopt economic reforms in line with their own interests.[73]

The Asian crisis was largely considered in the West to have been a positive development – spoken of not has having tremendously benefited the West at Asia's expense but rather as a chance for East Asia to 'correct' itself by conforming to Western economic ideals. East Asia was no longer seen as the world's most promising rising economic region, but rather an impoverished crisis, yet this was lauded the beginning of a promising new future. As noted in *The Economist*, "it took a national crisis for South Korea to turn from an inward looking nation to one than embraced foreign capital, change and competition."[74] The reality in Korea, however, was one of catastrophe and destitution. In 1998 the suicide rate spiked with the greatest increase occurring among those over 60 who had sought to lessen the economic burden on their children. Korean authorities pointed out that there was a tremendous increase in family suicide pacts, under which only the family leader's death was classified as suicide with the remainder listed as murders, meaning even the high official suicide rate significantly undercounted the real numbers.[75] The crisis was hailed as a positive development only because it benefited Western interests, with the devastating consequences largely overlooked in Western coverage.

Three times Pulitzer Prize winner and prominent *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman wrote in his book *The Lexus* that the destruction of Asian economies in the crisis was highly positive. "Globalization did us all a favour by melting down the economies of Thailand, Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia... in the 1990s, because it laid bare a lot of rotten practices and institutions," he stated.[76] What he failed to explain was how these countries had been so successful before being pressured to lower capital controls, how Malaysia continued to thrive after ignoring Western pressure to reform and deregulate, and why the systems he termed 'rotten' had produced far better results for their populations than those imposed by the West which replaced them.

Analysing the crisis' continuing implications ten years afterwards in 2007, Naomi Klein observed:

> *The truth is that Asia's crisis is still not over, a decade later. When 24 million people lose their jobs in a span of two years, a new desperation takes root that no culture can easily absorb. It expresses itself in different forms across the region, from a significant rise in religious extremism in Indonesia and Thailand to the explosive growth in the child sex trade. Employment rates have still not reached pre-1997 levels in Indonesia, Malaysia and South Korea. And it's not just that the workers who lost their jobs during the crisis never got them back. The layoffs have continued, with new foreign owners demanding ever-higher profits for their investments. The suicides have also continued. In South Korea, suicide became the fourth most common cause of death, more than double the pre-crisis rate, with thirty-eight people taking their own life every day [the world's highest suicide rate].*[77]

Klein attributed the fast growth of brothels, slums, human trafficking, child prostitution and suicide in the Asian countries affected to the Western financial centres' attacks on their economies and to the policies of the IMF which exacerbated the situation.[78] The catastrophe served as an important lesson on Western intentions and the dangers of trying to compromise with Western pressure, with those countries that rejected Western demands entirely faring far better. As economics professors Damien Cahill and Martijn Konings noted in the context of Western pressure to impose similar reforms in China:

> *The Asian crisis of 1997... did much to undermine the idea that following neoliberal strategies offered a viable development model. This was in part due to the sheer severity of the crisis and the way the currency speculation plunged an entire region of the world into a prolonged economic recession, but also due to the simple fact that those countries following the IMF rulebook had been affected most severely, whereas those that were quick to impose capital currency controls in fact remained somewhat shielded from the worst effects of the crisis.*

Cahill and Konings highlighted that Russia, which had also implemented the IMF's reforms and adopted neoliberal policies, had seen crises of its own within years of the Asian crisis, and that these collectively largely discredited the idea that Western restructuring of rival economies would do anything other than benefit Western interests at their expense.[79]

Although China had long been advised by prominent Western economists and pressured to lift its capital controls and enact a range of other deregulatory reforms, it had refused to do so.[80] As British economist Stephen D. King was among many to point out, it was precisely because China, unlike Thailand, South Korea, Indonesia and Malaysia, did not reform in the way the West was advocating, that it avoided crisis where others were devastated.[81] Manchester University professor and China specialist Jude Woodward noted regarding the agenda behind the United States' efforts to press China to enact similar economic reforms:

> *The U.S. tried to persuade China to pursue a range of neoliberal policies – privatization, deregulation, ending or reducing state and state-aided investment and so on – which would open the Chinese economy up to both U.S. commodities and capital while slowing its growth. Such tactics had succeeded with Yeltsin's Russia [in the 1990s] where 'shock therapy' led to catastrophic destruction of the Russian economy and thus its potential to act as a global counterweight to the U.S. But China had no equivalent of Yeltsin – a leader willing to comply with the West's demands – and so U.S. economic policy interventions against China have been confined to an assault from think tanks, the economic and financial media, Western business schools and economics departments arguing China should urgently deepen market 'reform' through privatizations and deregulation.*[82]

Nobel laureate in economics and chief economist at the Roosevelt Institute Joseph Stiglitz similarly observed that China had been spared from the Asian financial crisis because it had refused to adopt many of deregulatory policies advocated by the West. He highlighted that China continued to face pressure to adopt such reforms long after the crises in East Asia and Russia had exposed their catastrophic consequences.[83] A growing number of analysts thus concluded that the authority and prestige of Western academic and financial institutions was being exploited to leave rivals vulnerable to economic destabilization.

At a meeting in December 1997 Vice Premier Zhu Rongji told Chinese central bankers and financial executives that the country was fortunate not to have been involved in the Asian financial crisis, highlighting that state regulation of the financial system had been key.[84] It became increasingly clear particularly in the early 2010s that not only would China not Westernize its political system, but that it would also not move towards a neoliberal economic system. The *American Interest* thus noted in 2015

that China's "unequivocal rejection of Western political philosophy and values, raising serious doubts about the neoliberal presumption that China's current regime would ever embrace a U.S.-led liberal political-economic world order."[85] There emerged a growing consensus among Western media outlets and scholars that China's ruling party had decisively rejected reform along Western-advocated lines.[86]

China's combination of a far more independent non-Westernized political system, and awareness of the intentions of Western governments and institutions towards its economy, were key to sparing it economic and social hardship. While Western sources for decades continued to call for China to adopt reforms like South Korea and others did in the mid-1990s, historical precedents served as a powerful warning against doing so.[87] China's ability to resist Western pressure to reform its economic policies in line with Western interests was key to facilitating the country's economic rise, which by the 2010s had made it a fully peer level competitor to the United States.

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CHAPTER II

Asia Divided: Unifying Initiatives as a Threat to Western Primacy

> A kingdom divided in itself cannot stand.[1]
>
> – Thomas Hobbes

Divide and Rule: The Western Imperative of Preventing an Asian Power Bloc from Forming

Since the colonial era and particularly following Japan's industrialization in the early twentieth century, the modernization of East Asian economies and potential formation of regional economic or security blocs independent of the West have been seen as leading potential threats to the perpetuation of Western global hegemony. Economic, technological and political development of a regional power independently of the West to be able to challenge Western power, as achieved by Imperial Japan in the early twentieth century and subsequently by China in the early twenty-first, has thus consistently been met with efforts to isolate that power from potential partners within the region.

Two factors in the international relations of East Asia remain vital for the sustainment of Western hegemony. The first is that countries remain largely divided, with major powers maintaining economic, military and in some cases even cultural ties to the West eclipsing their ties to one another. The second is that countries remain economically, militarily and ideologically dependent on the West, relying on Western inputs into their technological supply chains and Western arms and bases for their defence

while governing under political systems prone to influence through electoral interference among other means. The goal of sustaining these has underpinned Western policy towards the region since direct European and American colonial rule came to an end.

A key advantage European powers had in the colonial era was that centuries of war on the continent had created new definitions of statehood and identity. Countries were largely divided into large states rather than small tribes or principalities, while the idea of a greater common European identity had also begun to emerge. When encountering peoples who lacked a unifying state identity, it was far easier for European powers to play different factions off against one another for their own gain. The British conquest of India, which was at the time ruled by rival kingdoms, was a key example, as had they united Britain's relatively tiny and outgunned forces would have failed to impose foreign rule. Although the Indian kingdoms lacked the military experience of European powers, they more than compensated with the quantities of their manpower, the quality of their military technologies and the gargantuan scale of their economy. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Indian kingdoms often deployed superior firepower to their European counterparts, such as in the Battle of Plassey in 1757 when the Mughal Empire deployed artillery of significantly superior calibres against the British, and did so in over six times the numbers. From 1845 the Sikh Empire's modern artillery similarly proved superiority and caused massive British casualties.[2]

Britain's successful conquest of India thus depended very heavily on exploiting the lack of a common Indian identity to encourage conflict between local kingdoms. To subjugate Tipu Sultanate, for example, the British gained the support of the rival Marathas kingdom after which, with both weakened in battle against one another, both were subjugated. The lack either a greater Indian or African state, power bloc or even a strong concept of pan-African or pan-Indian identity was key to facilitating similar gains for European empires across the Indian subcontinent and Africa, allowing them to divide their targets before conquering them in pursuit of global conquest. As noted by British professor of History and Cultures of Colonialism Stephen Howe:

> *European invaders were very often able to exploit division and disunity among their opponents. In most cases, they could recruit the bulk of their fighting men from among the colonized populations themselves. If Africans or Indians had united against the colonialists, then colonization would have been impossible except at staggering, unacceptable human and financial cost. But to do that, they would have had to think of themselves as 'Africans' or 'Indians,' a single people with shared interests, in the first place. Before the twentieth century very few could even potentially do so.*[3]

The key facilitator of Western hegemony in East Asia in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries bears strong similarities to that which previously facilitated its colonial rule over Africa and India – namely deep divisions within the region with the lack of a unifying political, military or economic bloc or a prominent sense of collective pan-Asian identity. By contrast the Western world has been largely united as a single power bloc since 1945 and consistently acted politically and military in unison. The Western Bloc has consistently presented a joint front against East Asian and other countries that challenge Western dominance, whether jointly economically sanctioning China[4] or jointly launching military interventions from Korea[i] to Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf. The prospective formation of unifying blocs in East Asia, from the Japanese Co-prosperity Sphere to the Beijing-Pyongyang-Hanoi-Phnom Penh-Jakarta Axis, have thus inevitably been vehemently opposed with the West going to considerable lengths to dismantle them. This was the case regardless of the ideology of the states which formed them or whether they were formed by coercion or consent, with the co-prosperity sphere and the axis being examples of opposites in these regards.

As in the colonial era, Western hegemony has been sustained by co-opting compliant local clients to support efforts to quash challengers to Western power. This has ranged from British use of Nepalese and Indian forces to suppress Indonesian nationalists after 1945, with these forces taking the majority of casualties among the British intervention force, to the

i In the Korean War the United States, Canada, Turkey, Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Greece, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and even South Africa, then under the apartheid rule of a small European elite, all jointly committed forces under U.S. command to a war against China and North Korea. They received support from Spain, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Norway, and West Germany.

rebuilding of the armed forces of Japan, South Korea and the Philippines as they were granted nominal independence to support U.S. forces in future wars. Much as the British used the Marathas against the Tipu before asserting their dominance over both parties, client states providing auxiliary forces could help to subjugate challengers from North Vietnam to China while themselves already being subjugated to Western control.

While China in the early twenty-first century formed close security and economic ties with Russia, Pakistan and Central Asian states through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Belt and Road initiative, these remained primarily strategic and lacked the cultural, historical and ethnic commonalities needed to form close bonds as those seen in the Western Bloc. An East Asian Bloc encompassing the territory of Japan's co-prosperity sphere, including Southeast Asia, China, Japan and Korea, could potentially achieve this but would require a resurgence in pan-Asian identity and solidarity comparable to the common Western identity that has bound the Western Bloc together for decades. Formation of such a bloc would play an important role in paving the way for the region becoming a new global centre of power, but while multiple initiatives to bring East Asia together have been proposed over several decades these have consistently faced strong Western opposition and been effectively undermined.

The Asian Monetary Fund: An Asian Alternative to the IMF

During the 1997 Asian financial crisis the Washington-based IMF and World Bank were the only international institutions able to provide support, and could delay to providing loans until crisis worsened and provide them only when extreme concessions and deep restructuring in line with Western interests were imposed. Observing this effective monopoly and its highly damaging consequences for East Asian economies, Japanese government officials proposed the creation of an Asian Monetary Fund (AMF). It was planned as a $100 billion fund with ten members: Japan, South Korea, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Australia. With IMF terms being highly

unpopular with both Asian populations and their governments, the AMF proposal was welcomed across Southeast Asia and in South Korea. In the West however, particularly in the United States, the AMF was perceived as an intolerable threat to the IMF's position which would undermine Western interests in East Asia.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) began discussing the potential for a fund similar to the AMF in response to the IMF's perceived severe misconduct during the financial crisis. The need for such an initiative had been highlighted since the 1996 Mexican Crisis when some East Asian economists predicted that while Western-run institutions backed Mexico, they would provide little support in Asia.[5] An Asian fund providing a safety net for regional economies was thus considered essential. Such proposals had widespread support particularly from the Thai government. Japan, which was then by far the region's largest economy, portrayed its AMF initiative as responding to the ASEAN countries' proposal, with the Japanese Ministry of Finance observing that an 'Asian consensus' had been created which to legitimized Japan's role as a regional economic leader.[6]

Japanese Vice Minister of Finance for International Affairs Eisuke Sakakibara, who was heavily involved in planning and promoting the AMF, claimed the IMF had done "great damage" to the Asian economies and taken measures with "obvious outcomes" exacerbating the financial crisis and causing a currency collapse.[7] He noted regarding the IMF's failings: "The IMF proposed many structural reform plans, but they didn't work. Asia has its unique economic structure, characterized for example by large family-owned conglomerates. The IMF and the U.S. called it cronyism and tried to change it. All they had in mind was to 'reform' the economy. But a country's economy is rooted in its culture and has a long historical background. It cannot be changed overnight."[8]

Sakakibara highlighted an "Asian sense of solidarity" while the AMF was being planned which was a key factor in his decision to promote the initiative.[9] Pooling Asian countries' reserves under the AMF could deal with crises while minimizing reliance on the West, and would also obviate time-consuming consensus building by automating countries' commitments. Although East Asia urgently needed an Asian Monetary Fund, the United States in particular played a leading role in ensuring that the institution

would never materialise. As Sakakibara elaborated: "At the time, the IMF didn't properly address the crisis. We were angry about that. That is why we planned to establish Asia's own version of the IMF. The ASEAN countries and South Korea supported the idea, but the U.S. didn't. The former U.S. Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers strongly opposed it, because he foresaw it weakening America's financial influence in Asia."[10]

Upon obtaining information regarding the AMF the United States moved quickly to pre-empt its creation. Deputy Treasury Secretary Larry Summers called Sakakibara directly at his residence at midnight and angrily berated him: "I thought you were my friend."[11] Summers had a heated two-hour discussion with the Japanese official and criticized the plan on the sole basis that it both excluded the United States and undermined the IMF by making East Asia independent of it.[12] Washington applied significant pressure to participants to abandon it, with China in particular lobbied not to support it by emphasizing that it posed a threat of "Japanese hegemony."[13] Following a long history of the U.S. using the two leading Asian powers' fears of one another to divide them,[14] and with Beijing placing a strong emphasis on its trading relationship with the United States and at the time seeking Washington's permission for accession to the World Trade Organization, China showed neither approval nor direct opposition. Without strong Chinese backing, and with potential participants all heavily reliant on Western trade threatened with consequences should they proceed, the AMF eventually floundered. U.S. interests were served and the dominance of Western financial institutions in the region remained unchallenged.

Malaysia's East Asian Economic Group and the Imperative of Regional Exclusivist Agreements

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Bin Mohamed, in power from 1981 to 2003 and later re-elected to office from 2018 to 2020, oversaw the country's rapid economic transformation from an underdeveloped

post-colonial state to an industrialized upper middle income country with the highest living standards in Southeast Asia – with the exceptions of the small trading states of Brunei and Singapore.[15] During his first tenure as Prime Minister Mahathir proposed the formation of an East Asia Economic Group (EAEG) representing exclusivist Pacific Asian regionalism and promoting close trade relations and co-operation among East Asian states. The group was considered to be a counterweight to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the European Union, both of which represented exclusivist American and European regionalist projects. The idea of such an East Asian exclusivist organization - one which by definition did not include Western powers and threatened to unite much of the region economically and to some extent politically - was perceived as a major threat to Western hegemony over the region and was thus strongly opposed.[16]

Mahathir was an outspoken critic of Western foreign policy, personally leading a boycott of British goods in his first three years in office under the 'Buy British Last' campaign,[17] and although relations with Western powers never became openly hostile he believed that intra-regional co-operation was key to securing its future against Western actions. Intending to use Asian-led development initiatives to facilitate regional integration and enhanced co-operation, Mahathir's administration enacted Malaysia's Look East Policy during its first year. At the time Japan had by far the largest and the most developed economy in the region, and Mahathir expressed hopes that Tokyo would play a leading role in East Asian bloc he sought to build. It was thus proposed that the East Asian Economic Group should be led by Japan. Offering a position of leadership appeared to be an effort to gain Tokyo's interest, and contrasted with its junior status in the U.S.-Japan alliance and the G6, the latter being termed a "steering group for the West" by senior figures at the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations.[18] Participation in the EAEG was expected to reduce Japan and Southeast Asia's reliance on trade with Western powers.

At a time when Japan was seen to have the potential to become the world's leading economy, the establishment of a regional sphere of influence through a body such as the EAEG would have been ideal for gaining an advantage in key Southeast Asian markets much as the United States

enjoyed through NAFTA and Germany did through the fast expanding European Union. Nevertheless extensive U.S. influence and Japanese industry's reliance on exports to America made Tokyo highly averse to drawing Washington's ire which participation in the EAEG would have done.[19] As Former Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama noted: "I think it represents a big problem that when making foreign policy decisions, Tokyo is always guided by the United States' approach. Japan depends on America."[20]

The EAEG ultimately failed primarily because Washington opposed its realization, and as key potential members traded more with the West than with one another they could be pressured not to join. As noted in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*:

> *The EAEG encountered strong opposition from the United States and Australia. Under President George H. W. Bush the United States successfully pressured key Asian allies, especially South Korea and Japan, not to support the EAEG. Fear of U.S. protectionism or a U.S. backlash was enough to persuade most East Asian states, whose economic and political survival depended on access to the U.S. market, to withhold their support for the EAEG. East Asian states subsequently rejected the EAEG proposal.*[21]

Professor of Political Science at the University of British Colombia Diane Mauzy, and founder of the University of Singapore's political science department Professor Robert S. Milne, noted regarding the cause of the EAEG's fall: "Indonesia and some of the other ASEAN states were not receptive to the EAEG, since they believed that they would be cutting themselves off from important regions and trade partners. The United States was hostile, and apparently urged Japan... and South Korea to reject the proposal."[22] Head of International Relations at the University of Indonesia Evi Fitriani was among many to similarly observe regarding Western measures to prevent inter-regional co-operation: "History teaches us that the reasons behind the absence of solid Asian regionalism and identity derive not only from domestic problems and inter-state distrust among Asian countries, but also from the presence of external powers like the U.S. in the region."[23]

There was a consensus among analysts that Western opposition and intimidation were key to preventing a regional exclusivist grouping forming in East Asia. As one Stanford University paper concluded:

> *Although some Japanese officials viewed the EAEG proposal favourably, the Japanese government nevertheless had to oppose it publicly in the face of strong opposition of the United States. Without the support of Japan, Malaysia had to recast the EAEG proposal as an East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC), which called for periodic consultations among East Asian countries on economic issues of common concern. This reformulation of the initiative implied that the EAEC would only serve as a platform for accelerating economic integration in East Asia by promoting the coordination of economic policies.*[24]

Even the EAEC could not materialize in the face of Western opposition, with the grouping popularly criticized as representing only an East Asia Excluding Caucasians – for its seemingly unacceptable exclusion of ethnically European countries. "The continued suspicions and strong objections of the United States meant that the EAEC was for all intents and purposes a stillborn proposal," the Stanford paper concluded.[25]

The EAEG and EAEC's failures demonstrated the degree to which Western influence over East Asian countries allowed Western powers to neutralize initiatives that could challenge Western hegemony before they could materialize. At a time when NAFTA and the EU were forming, efforts to form an East Asian equivalent were predicted in Washington which sought to pre-empt it by supported the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) that also included the United States, Australia and other non-East Asian members. It could therefore function as an alternative to any initiative such as the EAEC with the crucial difference that was not an exclusivist regional bloc. As observed in the *Encyclopedia Britannica: "*Under President Bill Clinton the United States continued to oppose the EAEG but did so mainly by giving new support to APEC. U.S. support for APEC is widely seen as a successful pre-emptive move against the EAEG and any other East Asia-type arrangements. The EAEG and APEC are often perceived as rivals."[26]

Prime Minister Mahathir proved to be ahead of his time in realizing the need for an East Asian economic bloc to safeguard the region's interests, with Western ill intentions being more widely recognized during the

1997 financial crisis. Chief Executive of the Global Institute for Tomorrow think tank, Chandran Nair, observed regarding the lasting impression the West's handling of the Asian crisis had: "The way the region was both misadvised and humiliated by Western institutions and political leaders. Asian leaders who spoke up against the prescriptions of the West, such as Mahathir Mohamed, were severely criticized but later proved right. Lessons were learned and not forgotten."[27] It was only afterwards that the need for an exclusivist Asian grouping was more widely recognised and Malaysian suspicions of Western intentions were vindicated. As International Business Professor Young Chan Kim observed in a prominent paper on the subject:

> *The financial crisis in East Asia signalled for the emerging economies to embark on various feats to further the notion of economic regionalism in the areas of international trade and global finance. The crisis further stimulated the region's economies, which were in prior years progressively interdependent towards the U.S. market, to acknowledge the value of the regional economic cooperation among themselves and to proceed to institutionalize such interdependence. Since November 2001, the notion of regional economic integration was initiated via the free trade agreement between the Chinese and the ASEAN nations, and from then on, more than 30 agreements were penned between subsequent members. Throughout the course of this period, the majority of the East Asian economies acknowledged the fact that unless they were to develop their own method of regional trade, they will undoubtedly be disadvantaged in the field of international trade and multilateral agreements.*[28]

In the immediate aftermath of the crisis in December 1997 a summit between ASEAN states and China, Japan and South Korea created the first exclusive East Asian regional grouping the ASEAN Plus Three (APT). The summit formed the APT framework which focused primarily on improving regional financial governance. New schemes such as the Chiang Mai Initiative and the Asian Bond Market Initiative all coordinated to organize financial policy co-operation among East Asian countries. The APT's framework subsequently expanded far beyond finance to include infrastructure logistics, food and health security issues, human resources development, e-commerce, energy resource management, small business development, pollution, maritime piracy, international migration, ICT, customs information exchange, agricultural technology and management training programs. APT members have also held regular meetings as they

founded the East Asia Summit (EAS). The APT and EAS are considered a revival of the EAEC initiative, with many of the same features of the previously proposed group.[29] Proposing the EAEC however proved to be ahead of its time, as it took the 1997 crisis and widespread abhorrence at Western conduct during it for the necessity of an exclusivist economic and political bloc to be more widely realized.

China as Number One

A key weakness of initiatives for East Asian regional integration was that countries across the region remained heavily reliant on trade with the United States in many cases more so than with one another, while the region's only large economy Japan was unwilling to more assertively press for integration while itself being under strong Western influence. This changed in the 2010s, however, with the rapid growth in both the economy of the People's Republic of China and its trading relationships across East Asia providing an unprecedentedly strong basis for a regional economic and possibly eventually a strategic partnership that could bring the region together independently of the West.

From 1991 to 2021 China achieved tenfold growth in incomes and labour productivity, and a thirteen-fold increase in GDP,[30] with a system of growth driven by savings, investment, productivity gains and domestic consumption contrasting sharply with that of the U.S. which was heavily reliant on debt.[31] China's rapid economic growth was considered a particularly serious threat to Western powers after 2008, when the Western world bore the brunt of the global financial crisis. Although global GDP registered a negative growth of –2.01 percent in 2009, Chinese growth continued almost unaffected. The result was growing concern that Western primacy could soon diminish, and a paradigm shift as analysts increasingly questioned not if China would become the world's leading economy but only how long this would take.

From 2007 to 2014 China's incremental GDP growth set it apart from the rest of the world, with growth greater than that of the next seven

countries (U.S., Brazil, India, Russia, Australia, Germany, Indonesia) combined gaining $6.85 trillion. The U.S. economy grew by only $2.939 trillion.[32] China surpassed the United States as the world's largest trading nation around 2013 (depending on the source this varies from 2012 to 2014), while the country's GDP accounting for Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) overtook America's as the world's largest in 2014.[ii] With the U.S. having held the position as the world's largest economy for almost 150 years since 1871, the IMF's announcement that the Chinese economy had eclipsed it in size came as a major blow to America's international standing. Just a decade prior influential think tanks and strategists had been planning a 'New American Century' projecting 100 years of U.S. dominance based on the assumption of its unchallenged economic primacy. The economic discrepancy favouring China only continued to grow, and by the end of 2020 the Chinese economy was fully one sixth larger than that of the United States.[33]

China's economic rise particularly after 2008 fuelled calls in the United States for drastic measures to undermine the country's growth. Barack Obama in his 2008 presidential election campaign pledged that he would take measures to label China a currency manipulator,[34] with such policy strongly and widely lobbied for by unions and interest groups representing American workers such as the Alliance of American Manufacturers. Anti-Chinese policies resonated well with the American public, and were adopted by numerous presidential hopefuls including Obama's Republican challenger in 2012 Mitt Romney,[35] the 2016 election winner Donald Trump[36] and his successor Joe Biden.[37]

While popular, the feasibility of reversing the trend towards Chinese primacy by the 2010s remained highly questionable. Unlike Imperial Japan, which economically relied far more on the United States than vice versa and could thus be brought to its knees with economic warfare, high levels of interdependence meant that American firms and living standards would

ii This is considered a better measure of the size of an economy by the majority of economists, as well as the International Monetary Fund and CIA, and is based directly on a country's productivity while avoiding incidents were the size of an economy on paper changes by double digits within weeks based on fluctuations in currency markets.

suffer at least as much as those of China from any similar measures. This was seen when the Donald Trump administration imposed tariffs on Chinese goods and limited co-operation in high-tech beginning in 2018. American consumers were set to pay a considerably higher price for trade war efforts,[38] while having a limited impact on China's economy.[39] For tech export restrictions, strong lobbying against it from American and Western firms was one notable indicator of just how destructive such policies would be potentially far more so than their effects on China itself. For those technologies in which China was seen to have no alternative to American or Western imports, tech war was consistently assessed to have only stimulated Chinese efforts to gain self-reliance which in the medium term would mean more competition and possibly a loss of primacy in key areas that the U.S. or its Western allies had previously dominated. Examples ranged from lithography machines to semiconductor fabrication software.[40]

By 2020 a consensus had begun to form that China would gain broad primacy in high tech to complement its leadership in GDP, with the country's leadership in key strategic technology areas ranging from artificial and quantum technologies to green tech and 5G all increasingly widely recognized. Strong discrepancies favouring China ranging from the number of papers published to the quality of its school education, and the greater degree of innovation which its much larger industrial base was able to support compared to America's increasingly deindustrialized economy, all portended its economic and tech advantages would only grow.[41] (For a fuller analysis of China's path to technological primacy see: Abrams, A. B., *China and America's Tech War from AI to 5G: The Struggle to Shape the Future of World Order*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2022.).

China's growing economic and technological primacy placed it in an increasingly strong position to foster initiatives for regional integration. Beijing's potential to create an East Asian economic and possibly a security bloc to pull Asian states out of their dependence on the West has been seen as a major threat to Western interests since a century of internal conflict and Western influence over the country ended in 1949. While the Japanese Empire threatened to form such a bloc through coercion, however, China in the twenty-first century appears poised to do so through co-operation.[42]

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank

Despite the 1997 crisis, the Southeast Asian economy grew rapidly in the thirty years following the end of the Cold War with most regional economies growing more than fivefold from 1991 to 2010.[43] Growth rates remained among the highest in the world, and came in parallel to a rise in both economic interdependence and trade with China with the latter growing from under $8 billion to $300 billion.[44] Although China replaced the U.S. as the world's largest trading nation in 2013 it emerged as Southeast Asia's primary trading partner long before with its share of the ASEAN market growing from 5 percent in 2001 to 13 percent in 2011. ASEAN trade with the U.S. and EU meanwhile fell sharply from 30 percent to 18 percent.[45] This provided a key first step to potentially undermining Western dominance of the regional order.

China invested heavily in supporting development in neighbouring ASEAN economies and thus providing more opportunities for trade through institutions such as the Asia Infrastructure Development Bank (AIIB) launched in 2014. As a Chinese proposed and predominantly Chinese funded initiative launched with twenty-one other countries, the bank's purpose was to boost growth in East Asian economies with an initial $100 billion in infrastructure investment. Its formation was widely seen to challenge the American-led World Bank and the IMF's Asian Development Bank.[iii] The United States therefore strongly opposed the AIIB, which it saw as threatening to undermine the U.S.-led international financial architecture based around the American and European Bretton Woods institutions. This was but the latest in a long series of Asian regional initiatives which threatened to reduce U.S. and Western influence.

The U.S. put significant pressure on countries to prevent them from joining the AIIB, just as it had to undermine the AMF and EAEG, but in

iii For indications of American leadership of the Washington D.C. based World Bank: all its presidents without exception have been American citizens, as have the majority of its chief economists. The United States maintains more voting power than any three leading states combined which has been strongly reflected in the bank's policies.

this case such efforts proved unsuccessful. Close U.S. partners Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan all signed up, the first three as founding members, which was seen to underline Washington's waning leverage. As Asian countries in the 1990s were far more reliant on economic ties to America than to Japan, let alone Malaysia, they could be pressured by the U.S. to undermine initiatives proposed by these two states. This was not the case with China in the 2010s however, which was the main trading partner of most countries in the region meaning that the United States could not put itself in an "us or them" position to undermine the AIIB. The result was something of a coup against U.S. interests – referred to by *Foreign Policy* as "Washington's big China screw-up."[46]

The World Bank's imposition of deep neoliberal reforms and deregulation as conditions for loans, often with only questionable benefits for those implementing them, incentivized countries to seek alternatives.[47] The AIIB by contrast lacked the West's neoliberal agenda or its propensity to impose similar terms, meaning it would likely be much more attractive and thus reduce opportunities for its Western competitor to operate. Indeed, had an institution like the AIIB existed in 1997 the outcome of the Asian financial crisis likely would have been very different – with Western institutions having been free to dictate terms to Asian states due to the lack of alternative sources of economic assistance. As Stanley Fischer, Former Governor of the Bank of Israel and Vice Chairman of the Federal Reserve System's Board of Governors, who headed IMF talks during the Asian crisis, said: "You can't force a country to ask you for help. It had to ask. But when it's out of money, it hasn't got many places to turn."[48] Considering the importance of this monopoly to Western interests, as demonstrated by the vast benefits derived from the 1997 Asian crisis, the detriment to Western interests as a result of the formation of a viable alternative such as the AIIB was great indeed.

The AIIB was expected to lend $10–15 billion annually to finance infrastructure projects, with sums set to increase over time. Infrastructure in much of Southeast Asia had largely been neglected with requirements considered "absolutely enormous" when the AIIB formed – at $8 trillion by some estimates.[49] Chinese Premier Li Keqiang stressed that infrastructure and connectivity were crucial for East Asia to be the most dynamic region

for economic growth.[50] President Xi Jinping stated regarding the goal of the AIIB: "If you want to get rich, you have to build roads first. The AIIB should accelerate the pace of boosting infrastructure connections in the region, promote regional cooperation and inject new dynamics for Asian economic development."[51] With poor infrastructure having long hindered growth in regional economies there was a significant possibility that the AIIB and similar future Chinese-led initiatives could accelerate it, with this being to the detriment of Western interests both by further sidelining extra-regional actors and by further narrowing the disparity between Asian and Western economies.

The *New York Times*, citing senior U.S. officials, reported regarding U.S. efforts to derail the AIIB: "In quiet conversations with China's potential partners, American officials have lobbied against the development bank with unexpected determination and engaged in a vigorous campaign to persuade important allies to shun the project."[52] *The Diplomat* elaborated regarding the reasons for U.S. opposition to such initiatives and how they challenged the status quo of Western dominance: "The key point is that the U.S. foreign policy community was always opposed to China or any other nation trying to upend the regional order in Asia, and there was never any reason to think the U.S. wouldn't be opposed to initiatives that do just that, such as the AIIB."[53] It would have been far more favourable to Western interests for China to leave much of Southeast Asia underdeveloped, lacking in infrastructure, and economically heavily reliant on U.S. and Western world.

The need for regional integration in the face of Western ill intentions was highlighted by International Business Professor Young Chan Kim, who observed in a prominent paper that the 1997 Asian crisis had made its importance clear. He highlighted that the 2008 crisis in the West, which undermined ASEAN exports to Western countries, had only increased the region's focus on boosting economic ties with China.[54] While the modernization and growth of regional economies was strongly in line with Chinese interests, and China thus had much to benefit from making the infrastructure investments in Southeast Asia, as an international institution the AIIB was governed independently and avoided political issues that could arise from massive direct Chinese investment in ASEAN's major

infrastructure projects. China thus gained opportunities to strengthen its trading partners and find a good investment for some of its multi trillion dollar foreign exchange reserves, while ASEAN countries gained infrastructure needed for their economies to flourish, with the only disaffected parties being extra-regional Western actors.

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and the Trans-Pacific Partnership

Of all China's initiatives to promote economic integration in the Western Pacific the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a free trade agreement including sixteen countries and accounting for 40 percent of world trade, had potentially the greatest strategic impact. Facilitating lower tariffs, enhancing technical and economic co-operation and promoting investment between members, RCEP's combined GDP at $21.3 trillion in 2016 and projected at over $100 trillion by 2050 made it potentially the world's leading economic bloc.[55]

Although dominated by East Asian members including China, South Korea, Japan and all the 10 ASEAN members, RCEP was not a regional exclusivist agreement and also included India, Australia and New Zealand. Strongly opposed by the United States in particular, and seen as a manifestation of China's growth to eclipse America as the centre regional trade, Washington went to considerable lengths to lobby potential members and prevent them from joining.[56] Where Malaysia's EAEG failed, unlike Malaysia in the 1990s China in the 2010s had a position in regional trade far eclipsing that of the United States which limited American leverage to pressure states to avoid the agreement. Indonesia for example, which would not risk jeopardising its economic ties with the U.S. when the EAEG was proposed in the 1990s, by the 2010s traded far more with China than with America leaving it far less vulnerable to pressure from Washington. This was key to RCEP's success where the EAEG failed.

The United States responded to fast-growing economic interdependence in East Asia, and the growing importance of regional powers' economic ties to China in particular, with the American dominated Trans-Pacific-Partnership (TPP) trade agreement. Widely considered an attempt to undermine RCEP, the agreement was specifically written to ensure America's continuing dominance. As attested to by President Barak Obama, signing East Asian countries on to the TPP would be key to ensuring a central role for the U.S. at China's expense. The president wrote to this effect: "The Asia-Pacific region will continue its economic integration, with or without the United States. We can lead that process, or we can sit on the sidelines and watch prosperity pass us by. As we speak China is negotiating a trade deal [RCEP] which would carve up some of the fastest growing markets in the world at our expense."[57] Obama elaborated that the TPP would "make sure we [the U.S.] write the rules for the 21st century," rejecting RCEP on the grounds that it did not prioritize American interests in the same way. His article directly stated that the U.S. did not seek to establish equal partnerships with Asian nations, but rather sought to dominate them for the coming century at China's expense in particular. In the president's words all states "should play by the rules set by America."[58] Obama's National Security Advisor Thomas E. Donilon called the agreement a potential game changer and the "economic lynchpin of U.S. rebalancing strategy in Asia."[59]

Dr Young Chan Kim was among those who highlighted a connection between the TPP and the coinciding foreign policy 'Pivot to Asia' initiated by Obama in the 2010s (see Chapter 12), observing:

> *From Washington's perspective, her [America's] economic policy has always been in tandem with the regional strategic policy. Thus, it is apparent that the TPP served as a viable route to bridge her economic relations with the ASEAN regions via the implementation of a newly reenergized strategic approach to East Asia... the notion of the TPP synthesizes with the idea of combatting heightening Chinese influence in the East Asian region. In a world of propagating FTAs [free trade agreements], the U.S. government is powerless to hinder East Asian governments from establishing agreements among themselves, and thus, the creation of a subsequent trade group that includes the USA serves as a beacon of U.S. influence in contesting increasing Chinese prestige in these regions.* [60]

Dr Kim's conclusions were strongly supported by a later statement by President Obama in September 2016: "TPP is a core pillar of America's rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific. And the trade and the growth it supports will reinforce America's security alliances and regional partnerships... Failure to move ahead with TPP will not just have economic consequences, but call into question America's leadership in this vital region."[61] Obama believed that should the TPP fail, American economic influence in Asia would be seriously threatened and prospects for regional co-operation independent of the U.S. and West would more likely be realized. Revealing a particularly hegemonic take on international relations, Obama stressed: "We have to make sure America writes the rules of the global economy. And we should do it today, while our economy is on the position of global strength. Because if we don't write the rules for trade around the world – guess what – China will."[62] He further reiterated this when signing for the trade agreement, stating: "TPP allows America – and not countries like China – to write the rules of the road in the 21st century."[63]

The TPP reflected the newfound influence China held as a result of its booming economic ties across East Asia, with three longstanding U.S. regional allies Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea all opting out of the grouping largely due to its confrontational position towards Beijing.[64] Close links between the TPP and U.S. efforts to strengthen military ties across the region aimed at China-led several analysts to refer to the TPP as "economic NATO."[65] China's state run paper *People's Daily* stated as early as 2011 regarding the TPP's purpose: "The U.S. does not want to be squeezed out of the Asia-Pacific region by China... TPP is superficially an economic agreement but contains an obvious political purpose to constrain China's rise."[66]

Although the TPP was a cornerstone of U.S. efforts to perpetuate its dominance in East Asia, it was undermined significantly by multiple leaks which made it unpopular with the American public. While its details were originally kept secret in all signatory countries, when leaked they were widely seen to be highly detrimental to American workers. Wikileaks founder Julian Assange, responsible for publicizing the leaked TPP documents, commented on its impact on the lives of populations of signatory

countries that the agreement "would trample over individual rights and free expression, as well as ride roughshod over the intellectual and creative commons. If you read, write, publish, think, listen, dance, sing or invent; if you farm or consume food; if you're ill now or might one day be ill, the TPP has you in its crosshairs."[67] Firms gained rights to veto government regulations which could threaten their profits – whether they were environmental regulations, increases to minimum wages or related to state healthcare,[68] which combined with the perception that the TPP would make it easier for American firms to outsource jobs to developing countries made the trade agreement highly unpopular. While China's economy was competitive and it could afford a regional trade agreement without its workforce suffering, the United States had been able to attract key partners in the Pacific such as Japan and Vietnam only by pledging to lower protectionist measures.[69] By signing the TPP, the Obama administration was seen by many to be sacrificing the interests of America's workforce in a desperate attempt to further geopolitical interests in Asia.

Preceding the 2016 U.S. presidential elections Donald Trump and other Republican candidates campaigned on cancelling the TPP,[70] with Trump pledging: "I will stop Hillary [Clinton]'s Obama Trade [TPP] in its tracks, bringing million of new voters into the Republican Party. We will move manufacturing jobs back to the United States and we will make America great again."[71] Trump cancelled the partnership just hours after being sworn into office – a decision widely criticized for weakening U.S. influence and benefitting China.[72] The Japanese government lamented that the TPP without United States would be 'meaningless.'[73] The TPP would have furthered U.S. interests, but also likely compromised the position of American workers which made it politically unviable once its terms became known. With RCEP quickly gaining traction in the aftermath, it would be difficult for the U.S. gain an advantage in future by reviving a similar deal.

China's rise in particular seriously undermined the West's ability to engineer and exploit future crises as had been done in 1997. To take the example used in the previous chapter, should South Korea find itself in a similar crisis to 1997 in future not only would it be less susceptible to pressure from Western institutions to deregulate and restructure, but it could look to institutions such as the AIIB and to China itself for support.

Should the IMF press a hard line for loans, while Western economists hail the benefits of 'more bad news' from the Asian economies as they did in the 1990s, any country would have an alternative to turn to which would have interests in protecting rather than undermining Asian economic achievements. This was of extreme importance particularly when considering how damaging Western actions in 1997 were.

As well as diminishing Western influence, regional exclusivist economic blocs can also create a greater sense of common interests and of unity in East Asia to the detriment of continued Western hegemony. As chief foreign affairs columnist for the *Financial Times* Gideon Rachman noted, "divisions and rivalries within Asia itself" served as the primary obstacle "to the smooth Easternisation of global political power."[74] Acting as a unifying force much like NAFTA and the European Economic Community had in the West, unifying regional initiatives facilitated by China's economic rise are set to succeed where those of Japan and Malaysia had failed, contributing to securing the region's future and protecting its hard won economic gains from external intervention.

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CHAPTER 12

Pivot to Asia and China's Rise: Can a Western-Dominated Order be Perpetuated?

> The Pacific is now an Anglo-Saxon Lake.[1]
>
> – General Douglas MacArthur on the new Asia-Pacific regional order following the defeat of the Japanese Empire

> America should write the rules. America should call the shots. Other countries should play by the rules that America and our partners set, and not the other way around.[2]
>
> – U.S. President Barack Obama on his vision for the future of the Asia-Pacific region in the twenty-first century

> It was Europe's entrenched relationship with violence and militarism that allowed it to place itself at the centre of the world... Europe's distinctive character as more aggressive, more unstable and less peace-minded that other parts of the world now paid off.[3]
>
> – Oxford University Professor Peter Frankopan on the establishment of a Western-dominated global order

China's Rise as a Threat to the Order of Western Hegemony

From its founding in 1949 the People's Republic of China was seen as a successor to Imperial Japan as the leading challenger to Western dominance over East Asia, and like Japan before it threatened to form a regional power bloc oriented against the interests of Western empire. Japan was seen to challenge Western hegemony through its potential, in the worlds of U.S. Admiral William Leahy, to "succeed in combining most of the Asiatic peoples against the whites.[4] President Franklin D. Roosevelt highlighted to this end after Asian leaders met in Tokyo in 1943 to declare

their solidarity in the pan-Asian cause: "1,100,000,000 potential enemies are dangerous."[5] In much the same way, the Pentagon Papers would later warn: "China... looms as a major power threatening to undercut our importance and effectiveness in the world and, more remotely but more menacingly, to organize all of Asia against us."[6]

Signs of an East Asian power rising independently and potentially challenging Western dominance of the region consistently prompted 'Yellow Scares' in Europe and the United States. As MIT professor and award-winning author John Dower noted, "the visceral hatred of the Japanese tapped Yellow Peril sentiments that, before the turn of the century, had been directed mainly against the Chinese."[7] China's re-emergence as a potential challenger to Western power in the twenty-first century led it to again become the target of similar vilification.[8] The fear of a rising Asian power had such resonance in the Western world and deep roots in Western history that Cold War propaganda widely depicted Soviet peoples as Asiatic – stressing their ethnic Mongol descent to stoke strong anti-Soviet feeling.[9] These themes resurfaced in the 2010s as relations between Russia and the Western Bloc again worsened.[10]

During the Pacific War the Japanese were widely portrayed as a "racial menace" as well as a cultural and religious one, with calls to arms against them made in the context of "perpetual wars between Oriental ideas and Occidental" and a crusade for both Western civilization and Christianity against an animalistic enemy. It was described by popular American writers as "a holy war, a racial war of greater significance than any the world has heretofore seen."[12] Attitudes to China from 1949, and particularly following Chinese military successes against Western armies in Korea, similarly focused on themes of race war, a clash of civilizations, a threat to Western dominance and a Christian Holy War.[13]

Military alliances and overseas bases were at the centre of Western efforts to encircle and isolate China, with the latter frequently accommodating American nuclear weapons including 950 in South Korea alone and hundreds more on Taiwan and Okinawa. The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), a U.S. led alliance mirroring to NATO in Europe, was established in 1955 and included Pakistan on China's Western border, as well as the Philippines, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, Britain and

France. While NATO was aimed at the USSR, SEATO was aimed at China. For the Philippines and Japan, joining U.S.-led alliance systems and hosting extensive American bases were conditions which they were pressed to accept in order to be granted independence from direct American rule. Bases on the U.S. overseas territories of Hawaii, Midway, Wake Island and Guam further facilitated projection of American power. The threat to China, which other than briefly in the mid-late 1950s had only minimal aerial warfare and naval capabilities, was very real. As reported by the Japanese magazine *The Diplomat*, the U.S. considered as means to undermine China "infiltration, sabotage, invasion by Chinese Nationalists [Guomindang], maritime blockades, South Korean invasion of North Korea, conventional air attacks on nuclear facilities, and the use of tactical nuclear weapons on selected targets."[14] While plans for nuclear strikes never materialized, largely due to the need to avoid a major war and conserve strength to tackle the more powerful Soviet Union, many others options were pursued (see Chapter 3).

The Sino-Soviet split in 1960, the resulting slowing of Chinese economic modernization, and the refocusing of Western offensive actions towards the USSR, the Warsaw Pact, Cuba and North Vietnam, resulted in a reduction of tensions with China towards the late 1960s. In the aftermath of the American defeat in Vietnam the following decade, and with Soviet power appearing to grow, Sino-U.S. relations improved in the face of a perceived common adversary with diplomatic relations formed in 1979. Although U.S. nuclear weapons were subsequently withdrawn from South Korea and Taiwan however, this was largely a result of advances in nuclear tipped missiles and the deployment of more survivable nuclear armed submarines and long-range bombers making nearby deployments essentially obsolete. The brief period of positive ties ended with the Cold war's conclusion as coverage of China in the West again worsened, although the strength of economic ties formed from the late 1970s ensured that relations remained cordial and Beijing was not at the focus of Western animosity. Instead, Western foreign policy's interventionist tendencies focused on other targets among them Iraq, Iran, Yugoslavia, Libya and Afghanistan.

An unprovoked American strike on the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, on May 7 1999 causing twenty-seven casualties, served as a stark reminder of the threat China faced. Launching from the U.S. mainland, a $2

billion B-2 bomber delivered NATO's most precise weapon the JDAM satellite guided bomb to target the embassy. CIA director George Tenet later testified that it was the only air strike of the campaign organized and directed by the CIA rather than by the military.[15] Although the CIA, State Department and the British Foreign Office all claimed the strike was accidental, this was not seen as credible even among Western experts and officials.[16] Although Beijing fiercely protested and large anti-U.S. protests erupted in major cities, both sides sought to manage the incident to prevent relations from deteriorating.

Relations between China and the West would only begin to worsen more sharply under the Barak Obama administration, which placed the Pivot to Asia initiative at the centre of its foreign policy. This involved rebalancing both the U.S. Military and the State Department to place East Asia and China in particular, rather than Europe or the Middle East, at the centre of their attentions. The initiative responded to growing concerns that China was not only weakening Western hegemony over the region, but also threatening to overtake United States world on the global stage as a new predominant power. China had over the past two decades rapidly closed the gap with the U.S. in GDP, overtaken it as the main trading partner of the majority of countries across the world, and would supersede it as the world's largest economy in 2014.[17] The country had also made much progress towards modernizing and expanding both its military industrial base and its research and development, and as a result the technological lead of over three decades that America's defence sector enjoyed 1990 would be largely non-existent by the late 2010s and in some fields had transformed into strong Chinese advantages.[18]

A further challenge posed by China was systematic, with its development offering an alternative to Western political and economic models and demonstrating that modernization did not need to come hand in hand with westernization. This was seen to pose an unacceptable challenge to the Western idea of an 'end of history' and inevitable universal adoption of Western political and governance models after the Cold War. As noted in the *New York Times,* China had built "an alternative value system that competes with Western liberal democracy,"[19] with the *Wall Street Journal* noting weeks earlier that China's success threatened the global "triumph

of liberal democracy."[20] Similar statements were widely made by officials to the effect that the formerly unchallenged post-Cold War spread of Western political values and ideology was increasingly at risk, and the ascent in Western power brought to an end, largely due to China's rise.[21]

To a large extent China's very existence as a rising power outside the Western sphere of influence was sufficient to lead it to be targeted. As noted by former Assistant Secretary to the U.S. Treasury Paul Craig Roberts regarding U.S. foreign policy and the dangers faced by those which remained outside its control:

> *The United States has an ideology of world hegemony and does not accept any prospect of any country being sovereign or acting on its own. You have to be an American vassal state. Just as the United States has turned all of Europe, Canada, Australia and Japan into vassal states that is the only terms on which the United States can accept Russia and China. It will not accept them as sovereign, independent countries following their own interests... The situation will become more and more hostile. It's not going to go away, because the United States is guided by... ideology of American world hegemony which means hegemony over Russia and China.* [22]

The East Asian regional order, unlike those of Europe or North America, had for centuries been based on the dominance of extra-regional imperial powers which, beyond projecting military force, sought to strongly influence its culture and ideology and economy in line with their interests. As leading U.S. foreign policy strategist and former State Secretary Henry Kissinger observed: "The historic European order had been self-contained... Occasionally, European powers enlisted outside countries to strengthen their positions temporarily... but non-Western powers... had few interests in Europe and were not called on to intervene in European conflicts. By contrast, the contemporary Asian order includes outside powers as an integral feature."[23] An order based on the dominance of Western imperial interests dated back to the Portuguese empire's expansion into East Asia in the sixteenth century. Portugal had been quickly followed by other Western empires which successively competed to impose their dominance, the last of which was the United States which invaded and subjugated Hawaii, Guam, the Philippines and other Pacific territories from the late nineteenth century. While the Japanese Empire temporarily succeeded in ending Western control, its defeat heralded a

new era in which American dominance was complete and unchallenged. As General Douglas MacArthur proclaimed, "the Pacific is now an Anglo Saxon lake," leaving the U.S.-led Western Bloc that formed in the aftermath of the Second World War as the undisputed hegemon for three quarters of a century. China's successes in modernizing within its borders and in the trading partnerships it was forming overseas, which displaced Western powers' formerly central position in the regional and world economies, were an imminent threat to the perpetuation of this order.

Ending Western Military Primacy in East Asia: Trends in the U.S.-China Power Balance

In response to China's challenge to Western hegemony, and the undermining of Western economic influence, the United States was increasingly forced to rely on projection of its military power as a cornerstone of its dominance of the region. U.S. Defence Secretary Ashton Carter was one of many who attested to America's intention to retain military dominance, stating in 2016: "The United States will remain the most powerful military and main underwriter of security in the [East Asian] region for decades to come – and there should be no doubt about that."[24] A commitment to a vastly expanded regional military presence was central to the Pivot to Asia initiative, with President Obama emphasizing military aspects when announcing the Pivot in late 2011 as follows:

> *With most of the world's nuclear power and some half of humanity, Asia will largely define whether the century ahead will be marked by conflict or cooperation... As President, I have therefore, made a deliberate and strategic decision – as a Pacific nation, the United States will play a larger and long-term role in shaping this region and its future... I have directed my national security team to make our presence and mission in the Asia Pacific a top priority... As we plan and budget for the future, we will allocate the resources necessary to maintain our strong military presence in this region. We will preserve our unique ability to project power and deter threats to peace... we are already modernizing America's defence posture across the Asia Pacific.*[25]

The president emphasized a strong presence in the South China Sea, the importance of strengthening military partners and holding more joint exercises, and the need to tackle "proliferation and maritime security" which were widely seen as thinly veiled references to North Korea and China as the primary targets of the buildup.[26] Obama christened the new doctrine with the announcement that over 2,500 U.S. Marines would be deployed within striking distance in Northern Australia. In the next four years the number of U.S. personnel deployed to the Asia-Pacific had increased by 30,000,[27] with plans to deploy 60 percent of the U.S. Navy there by 2020 and potentially even more afterwards.[28] The U.S. Military began to set up equipment depots in Cambodia and Vietnam and began exercises with the latter,[29] and soon afterwards the Navy gained permission for port calls in Thailand and Malaysia and rights to a base surveillance drones in the latter.[30] These developments marked only the beginning. Further significant moves towards militarization of the region were made frequently under Obama. In his final year *Reuters* described "a 10-year military pact with the Philippines that opens the way for U.S. troops, planes and warships to have greater access to bases in the Philippines."[31] Expansion of a Marine base in Australia agreed that year would host warships and B-1B long-range bombers.[32]

The growth of the American military presence was facilitated by transfers of assets away from other regions rather than an increase in the military's overall size, meaning it represented a surge facilitated by reallocation of strength as opposed to a steady growth in American fighting power. China by contrast saw rapid growth in the size and capabilities of its navy and air force steadily and sustainably facilitated by the growth of its economy and advances in its tech sector rather than a sudden surge. While there was a limit to the proportion of forces the U.S. could reallocate to East Asia, and its military was modernizing and growing at far slower than that of China, Chinese military power was set to continue to grow in perpetuity so long as economic growth remained relatively stable – which it did even during the worst of the financial crisis in 2008 and the Covid-19 crisis in 2020. Thus Obama's pivot could at best only slightly prolong American military primacy in East Asia, and even then only at the expense of defence commitments elsewhere.

A major factor against America's favour in its efforts to remain the dominant military force in East Asia was that its military capabilities not only needed to eclipse those of its rivals but had to surpass them overwhelmingly since, unlike regional actors, its forces were stretched across multiple fronts in over eighty countries and six continents.[33] As East Asia security expert Timothy Walton observed: "Unfortunately, the United States does not fight on a chessboard. What really matters is the localized correlation of forces, and that may be a stronger factor toward deterrence in the region."[34] A 2015 RAND report similarly observed: "A number of factors complicate the U.S. military position vis-à-vis China. The U.S. military is pulled in several directions by a range of world-wide demands, while the PLA enjoys the ability to focus more narrowly." A U.S. focus on counterinsurgency in the Middle East and Central Asia also long diverted significant resources while China faced no such handicaps.[35] Furthermore, the fact that U.S. forces deployed for power projection at long distances overseas forced them to contend with far longer supply lines placing a greater strain on resources.

U.S. military planners referred to four 'great power adversaries' – Iran, North Korea, Russia and China[36] – which the Pentagon leadership repeatedly expressed doubts regarding its ability to defeat.[37] All had in the 2000s and 2010 surpassed American expectations in their military performances, including Russia's ability to partly recover from economic crisis and rebuild a modern military,[38] North Korea's missile programs[39] and conventional modernization,[40] China's military modernization[41] and the potency of Iran's ability to project power in the Middle East through drones and proxies.[42] While countering all four of these stretched U.S. forces, the War on Terror in the early 2000s, as noted in a RAND Corporation report, had "led the U.S. military to reorganize and re-equip many of its forces in way that maximizes counterinsurgency rather than conventional capabilities."[43] The result was a military which was far less prepared to engage major state adversaries. Only in October 2017 did the Pentagon update its fighting manual to revert the military to preparing primarily to fight near-peer adversaries, with the U.S. military advantage over such rivals having been "steadily eroded" for more than two decades until then according to Army Chief of Staff General Mark Miley among others.[44] Similar conclusions were reached by U.S.

Congress's National Defence Strategy Commission, the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and many other senior officials, with Heritage Foundation think tank referring to the result as an "increasingly dangerous world threatening a significantly weaker America."[45]

Despite the centrality of projection of U.S. Military power to sustaining a Western-dominated regional order, the rapid erosion of Western military primacy in the 2010s set the stage for a potentially pivotal change in the 2020s as Western militaries were set to face increasingly overwhelming disadvantages in the air and at sea. From the 1990s sharp post-Cold War reductions to U.S. defence spending and growing trends towards outsourcing of industry in the broader economy between them fuelled a sharp contraction in the American military industrial base with highly detrimental consequences. By 2011 U.S. Strategic Command General C. Robert Kehler was one of many to observe: "Since the space age began, we have rarely been so reliant on so few industrial suppliers."[46] In 2019 a Government Accountability Office report concluded that as a result of industry contraction, of the 183 contracts for major weapons systems examined 67 percent had no competitive bidding process which removed incentives for firms to improve their prices or their quality.[47] Multiple Defence Department reports highlighted that by the mid-2010s there were only two or even one domestic firms producing key defence products, and in some cases none as declining local manufacturing forced the Pentagon to look abroad.[48]

A number of factors including the rapid erosion of America's civilian industrial base, the shrinking number of defence firms resulting in oligopolies and many cases of full monopolies,[i] and growing lenience with the Soviet challenge gone towards outsourcing much of the defence industry particularly to East Asia, fuelled industrial decline. The *National Interest*

i Speaking to former State Secretary Mike Pompeo in April 2021, German-American tech billionaire Peter Thiel observed to this effect: "What happened in '89 after the Cold War ended, was there was a shrinking of military budgets, but there was also an incredible consolidation of the defence industry, and the consolidation actually meant the money was spent less efficiently – especially with respect to R&D. And so we spent less money and [with] less efficiency, and so there was some massive decline in the effectiveness of the system in the 90s." (The Nixon Seminar on Conservative Realism and National Security, April 6, 2021.)

thus questioned in 2018 "whether it is even possible anymore to make purely American weapons," elaborating that "the Pentagon tries to save money by buying commercial-off-the-shelf technology instead of custom-made gear, but the commercial sector relies on Chinese-made components, especially electronics… transforming into Made in America will not be cheap or easy."[49] U.S. defence journalist Brett Tingley was one of many to underline: "Currently, the U.S. is almost entirely reliant on foreign-made electronics to power most of its technologies, both in the defence and consumer sectors," which was one notable example with significant implications for both civilian high tech and for the defence sector.[50] Indeed, the gap in profitability between producing for the military in the U.S. and in China was so great that firms supplying the Pentagon took tremendous legal risks to disguise Chinese products as American ones to capitalize on it.[51]

Erosion of the U.S. defence industrial base became increasingly evident around 2000 as domestic sourcing for production of critical systems such as aircraft parts and engines declined sharply with overseas production seen as more efficient. The Pentagon proved unable to reverse the outsourcing of vital areas of production, often to China,[52] with market forces dictating that the inefficiencies of producing in America made it unaffordable. Thus even proposals in the mid-2000s to require U.S. content in defence products to be at least 60 percent were notably dismissed by the Pentagon as unrealistic.[53] As the *Washington Post* noted in 2018, following a White House report[ii] on the Manufacturing and Defence Industrial Base and Supply Chain, "the vast supply chain serving the U.S. Military has become dependent on low-cost foreign components… Things such as machine tools,

ii National Defence Industrial Association president and retired four-star Air Force general Hawk Carlisle highlighted serous challenges the report raised from "reliance on single producers within the supply chain, dependence on unstable or unfriendly foreign suppliers for critical components, and misplaced presumption of continued pre-eminence of American military superiority." "Compounding these risks, the report highlights a drain on talent that now flows toward Silicon Valley start-ups instead of defence-focused industries," he further warned, reflecting the growing consensus regarding defence industry decline. (Davenport, Christian, 'White House report points to severe shortcomings in U.S. military supply chain,' *Washington Post,* October 4, 2018.)

infrared detectors and night-vision systems are largely provided by foreign suppliers, officials say, raising questions about whether the U.S. Military would have access to them in a protracted war." This was in part a result of a "broken procurement system."[54] The decline in civilian industry meant many products with defence applications, such as flat panel displays, were no longer made America.[55] (For a fuller assessment of American industrial and military-industrial decline see Abrams, A. B., *China and America's Tech War from AI to 5G: The Struggle to Shape the Future of World Order*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2022.).

The erosion of the American military industrial base has been a key factor undermining its ability to counter potential adversaries and China in particular, which has the world's largest industrial base and the largest scale of research and development.[iii] A tangible manifestation of this decline has been the very persistent failures in major post-Cold War American weapons programs. The country's only post-Cold War destroyer or cruiser sized warship program the Zumwalt-Class destroyer, for example, suffered serious cost overruns and performance issues leading to over 90 percent of planned ships being cancelled – with three completed with watered-down capabilities costing over $7 billion each while suffering a wide range of performance issues.[56] The *National Interest* referred to the destroyers in 2020 as "overbudget ships that don't even work" and "floating boondoggle," reflecting the broad consensus among analysts.[57] The lighter Littoral Combat Ship and Gerald Ford Class aircraft carrier, which like the Zumwalt were the only post-Cold War ships classes of their kind, were by some accounts even more problematic.[58] The former began to be retired decades ahead of schedule due to serious performance issues after suffering from tremendous cost overruns and performance inefficiencies,[59] and ended up costing three

iii Heritage Foundation Senior Research Fellow James Jay Carafano warned the defence sector was "already on life support when Obama took over," with the administration's policies accelerating decline and "gutting America's defence industry" in the process. "America is returning to the 19th century, a world where it will be incapable of producing the instruments needed to defend itself," he warned, with the situation having worsened considerably by the end of Obama's term. (Carafano, James Jay, 'Obama, Gates are Gutting America's Defense Industry,' *Heritage,* September 1, 2009.)

times as much to produce as late Cold War era destroyers.[60] The state of the U.S. Navy's fast declining shipyards and maintenance capabilities was similarly if not much more serious.[61]

Similar issues crippled American military aviation. A notably example was the F-35 stealth fighter, developed under a $1.7 trillion a program,[62] which before entering service was already $163 billion over budget, seven years behind schedule[63] and suffering from hundreds of design defects[64] of which more continued to be discovered.[65] Its underperformance was widely attested to from military think tanks such as NSN[66] and RAND,[67] to organizations such as the Project on Government Oversight,[68] and individuals such as the Pentagon's chief weapons tester Michael Gilmore[69] and Marine Captain Dan Grazier.[70] The consensus widely supported Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain's conclusion that the fighter was "a textbook example" of the country's "broken defence acquisition system," and "both a scandal and a tragedy with respect to cost, schedule and performance."[71] Defence Secretary Christopher Miller stated in 2020 that "the F-35 is a piece of ****," while his predecessor Patrick Shanahan referred to it in 2019 as "f—ed up."[72]An inquiry by the Pentagon's Office of the Inspector General found that Shanahan's criticisms "were consistent with other comments about problems in the F-35 program made by other senior DoD officials."[73] The fighter's development costs reached an extreme $55.5 billion[74] compared to just $4.4 billion for its Chinese rival the J-20,[75] despite the latter having a much greater R&D burden as China's first ever stealth fighter.

America's only other post-Cold War fighter the F-22 was similarly problematic with watered-down capabilities,[76] a cost per airframe 276 percent as high as initially planned ($412 million rather than $149 million),[77] and exorbitant maintenance costs and requirements that forced a decision to cancel 75 percent of production.[78] Issues with breakdowns, poisonous effects on pilots' lungs,[79] and problematic avionics and computer architecture,[80] among several others, sharpened the contrast to its successful Cold War era predecessors the F-4 and F-15. The fighter failed to produce a successor to the F-15, with production terminated less than six years after entering service where by contrast the F-15 is still in production and on order by the U.S. Air Force today almost fifty years after it entered service

in 1975. The F-22 was much more expensive and had a shorter range, lower availability rates, lower reliability, much poorer versatility, much greater difficulty incorporating upgrades and many more performance issues while failing to deliver an improved performance in those areas in which the Air Force assessed the F-15 as most deficient.[81] In May 2021 it was confirmed the fighter would be consigned to an early retirement.[82]

U.S. defence-related spending, according to the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies, has remained around $1 trillion annually – more that the total GDP of all but the world's fifteen largest economies. While its tremendous budget has been hailed as a sign that the America will remain the dominant power in the Western Pacific, however, deriving military strength evaluations from budgets can very often be highly misleading. Although the U.S. spent considerably more on its armed forces, by 2021 Chinese spending on military hardware acquisitions had surpassed it with the American lead considered highly unlikely to be regained.[83] This was a result of a discrepancy in efficiency, with the bulk of American spending going to salaries, veterans' benefits and administration to keep up with the dollar's much lower purchasing power in the country.

Rampant inefficiencies and, according President Donald Trump,[84] severe corruption prevalent throughout the U.S. defence acquisition system significantly undermined the quality of weapons systems and fuelled major cost overruns. As Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld highlighted as early as 2001: "In fact, it could be said it's a matter of life and death," stressing: "The adversary has come closer to home. It's the Pentagon bureaucracy." He admitted that significant sums went unaccounted for, stating: "According to some estimates we cannot track $2.3 trillion in transactions."[85] The *New York Times* reported, citing military officials who attested to how the poor state of affairs in the Pentagon undermined America's fighting prowess: "The Pentagon's spending of the public's money is a dirty business, one that too often has nothing to do with national defence, one in which secrecy and deception are valuable currencies."[86] Army General Edward Hirsch, who had undertaken extensive efforts to amend the acquisition system, referred to it as "a system designed for failure – it isn't going to work."[87] Danielle Brian, director of the Project on Government Oversight, similarly observed: "Waste has become ingrained in the defence budget because

opposition to defence spending is portrayed as unpatriotic, and legislators are often more concerned about winning Pentagon pork than controlling defence waste... You have a black hole at the Pentagon for money and a blind congress."[88]

As Senior Fellow at the Centre for a New American Security Elsa B. Kania was among a growing numbers of analysts to warn: "The U.S. no longer possesses clear military-technical dominance, and China is rapidly emerging as a would-be superpower in science and technology."[89] Reports by the U.S. Defence Intelligence Agency similarly indicated by 2019 that China's defence sector had surpassed the United States in the sophistication of a number of its weapons systems – a trend which only accelerated in the following years.[90] Chinese armaments with growing frequency succeeded in combining superior performance with costs a fraction of those of their American counterparts, with examples ranging from comparisons of the HQ-9B and Patriot air defence systems to the Type 054A frigate and Littoral Combat Ship. The Pentagon's Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency in 2018 thus highlighted regarding the defence sector's growing struggles to keep up: "Our acquisition system is finding it difficult to respond on relevant timescales to adversary progress, which has made the search for next generation capabilities at once more urgent and more futile."[91]

As U.S. Army Chief of Staff General Mark Milley observed at a hearing at the Senate's defence appropriations subcommittee, China's more cost effective defence sector and government owned R&D could compete with the United States using just a fraction of the defence budget. This and the tremendous discrepancy in purchasing power favouring China by some estimates made the PLA better funded than the U.S. Military, as a *Bloomberg* study in 2018 was among several to conclude.[92]

Where the U.S. faced a sharp military decline, China had from the Cold War's end seen a military resurgence which brought U.S. global military primacy to serious question – let alone primacy in East Asian waters and skies where China had a strong home advantage. From negligible aerial warfare or naval capabilities in 1990 compared to the U.S. or USSR and technologies around three decades behind, China by 2020 had largely bridged technological gaps and had established supremacy in many areas

ranging from quantum communications to hypersonic aircraft. As John Chipman, director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies think tank, observed in 2017 regarding the results of Chinese advances "Western military technological superiority, once taken for granted, is increasingly challenged."[93] This conclusion was widely echoed in other assessments and by the mid-2010s had become the consensus view.[94] In 2014 Congress Deputy Undersecretary of Defence and Acquisition Frank Kendall similarly observed that in conflict with China, "technological superiority is not assured. This is not a future problem. This is a here-now problem."[95] Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee John McCain in 2016 similarly warned of a "real and increasing risk of losing the military technological dominance that we have taken for granted for thirty years.'[96] American chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Seapower Randy Forbes warned in 2016 that China's development of game changing new weapons systems would seriously alter the regional balance of power, stressing that Beijing was "committed to upending both the conventional military and nuclear balance" by modernizing its forces and in many technologies outpacing the U.S.[97]

Examples of areas of Chinese primacy were manifold by 2020 and fast growing. The country from 2019 fielded the world's first operational hypersonic aircraft, the WZ-8, for reconnaissance roles,[98] as well as the world's first hypersonic glide vehicle armed tactical missile the DF-17.[99] The International Institute for Strategic Studies noted regarding China's Type 055 destroyer, which boasted superior stealth to its Western counterparts,[100] that it "may be the most capable multi-role surface combatant currently at sea," and represented "a step change in PLAN [PLA Navy] abilities to mount independent long-range deployments or task-group operations."[101] China's J-20 stealth fighter meanwhile demonstrated growing superiority over its American counterpart the F-22, with important advantages provided by its distributed aperture systems, modern data links, helmet mounted sights, AESA radar guided air-to-air missiles with longer ranges, and its access to the world leading PL-10 short ranged missile. By 2020 the J-20 was one of just two fighters of its advanced generation worldwide both in production and fielded at squadron level strength alongside the F-35.

China demonstrated a very considerable lead in developing revolutionary new technologies, and in 2016 launched the world's first quantum satellite which in 2020 became the first to demonstrate quantum-secured space communication. No other country was expected to have similar satellites before 2025.[102] In 2021 it was used to secure large parts of the country's power grid against cyberattacks or blackouts.[103] According to the *Scientific American* the Chinese achievement, "arguably represents the nation's lead in an emerging contest among great powers at the frontiers of physics," leaving the U.S. "scrambling to catch up,"[104] with the *MIT Technology Review* stressing that its potential impact on military communications were "game changing."[105] In quantum computing, too, China demonstrated a strong lead with scientists consistently setting new records for processing speed with the world's most powerful quantum computers.[106] Advances came as part of a broader trend towards eroding American primacy in computing, which was described by Northrop Grumman chief executive Kathy Warden as having "shrunk to an alarming state."[107] Analysts at the Jamestown Foundation observed that China's advantage in the field could provide an "asymmetric information advantage in a conflict scenario" while: "In future warfare, quantum computing may prove to have strategic significance on par with nuclear weapons." [108] The potential military applications of quantum computers were manifold and included providing an overwhelming advantage in cyber warfare.[109]

In artificial intelligence (AI) China was also poised to retain a comfortable lead. AI development in China consistently received considerably more funding than in the U.S. from the mid-2010s,[110] with the *MIT Technology Review* in December 2019 referring to a "deep-seated fear within the policy community that the U.S. is sorely losing in the so-called AI arms race" partly as a result.[111] By the late 2010s China was publishing more AI research papers annually than any other country, with a strong lead in papers on deep learning which was a particularly complex subset of machine learning in artificial intelligence,[112] while its AI start-ups had been receiving more venture capital than their U.S. counterparts for some years.[113] It overtook[iv] the U.S. for AI citations in 2020,[114] with prevailing

iv Regarding the U.S. disadvantage, Research Associate for the Technology and National Security Program at the Centre for a New American Security, Megan

trends indicating a strong Chinese lead.[115] Former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defence Robert O. Work noted in January that at the Pentagon there was "certainly no technology that we could identify would have as broad of an impact on national security as artificial intelligence."[116]

As former Google Ideas director and prominent State Department foreign policy advisor Jared Cohen and Chief Executive Officer of the Centre for a New American Security Richard Fontaine observed, leadership in AI could provide "an economic, military, and political advantage for decades to come."[117] Russian President Vladimir Putin similarly stated in 2017: "artificial intelligence is the future... whoever becomes the leader in this sphere will become the ruler of the world."[118] A prominent 2021 paper on the subject from Taiwan's CTBC Business School noted: "It has become an article of faith amongst those in the commanding heights that whoever unties the 'AI Gordian Knot' would dominate the 21st century. China's palpable ambition to dominate this AI future, backed by overwhelming financial might, makes it the leading contender in this race and seemingly inevitable victor."[119]

On March 1, 2021, the U.S. National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence published a thorough 756-page report detailing how China was expected to establish itself as the undisputed leader in the field and why America was in a poor position to compete. "America is not prepared to defend or compete in the AI era," it concluded.[120] The discrepancy in general education was also important to determining how easily AI could be

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Lamberth, highlighted that a shortage of AI talent was a leading issue. She stated: "It's clear a shortage of AI talent exists. There simply are not enough STEM [Science, Technologic, Engineering, Mathematics] educated Americans to fill the ever growing number of AI-related jobs. And even if the U.S. were to adopt a fully funded, long-term educational initiative to train U.S. students in STEM, this kind of effort would take decades to realize." Founder of the venture capital firm Sinovation Ventures Lee Kai-fuwas one of many who stressed that "the large number of science and engineering college students in China give the country a unique advantage in AI development," contrasting to U.S. weakness in the field. ('The American AI Century: A Blueprint for Action: Transcript,' *Center for a New American Security*, January 17, 2020.) (Jing, Meng, 'China's first "deep learning lab" intensifies challenge to US in artificial intelligence race,' *South China Morning Post,* February 21, 2017.)

adopted, a notable example being the U.S. Military where, as the *National Interest* observed in the title of a major article on "data-illiterate culture": "illiteracy, not morality, is holding back military integration of artificial intelligence."[121] This issue was widely alluded to, including by the Defence Secretary, and affected the civilian economy in much the same way as it did the military.[122] In the second week of October 2021 former First Air Force Chief Software Office Nicolas Chaillan stressed that the U.S. had already lost the competition with China in artificial intelligence, cyber capabilities and machine learning. A former technology entrepreneur, software developer, cyber expert and inventor, Chaillan slammed the Pentagon's bureaucracy for failing to adapt to the competition and stressed: "We have no competing fighting chance against China in 15 to 20 years. Right now, it's already a done deal; it is already over in my opinion."[123] More moderate statements to similar effect were made by a number of figures in the U.S. military leadership most notably by Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff John Hyten.[124]

Trends in defence competition and in high tech more generally indicated that China was set to enjoy a significant military advantage globally and an overwhelming one in East Asia. This presented a different challenge to Western dominance of the region than Japan or the USSR had, and potentially marked an irreversible turning point in regional order away from centuries of domination by extra-regional actors.

Containment of China and the Importance of the South China Sea

The implementation of the Pivot to Asia under the Barack Obama administration was interpreted in China as part of a Western containment effort mirroring that which had been pursued in the Cold War. Chinese President Hu Jintao to this end remarked in 2012 that the United States had "strengthened its military deployments in the Asia-Pacific region, strengthened the U.S.-Japan military alliance, strengthened strategic

cooperation with India, improved relations with Vietnam, inveigled Pakistan, established a pro-American government in Afghanistan, increased arms sales to Taiwan, and so on. They have extended outposts and placed pressure points on us from the east, south, and west."[125]

On all China's five major fronts Western efforts to isolate the country were evident. To the east Japan and Korea were secured by 80,000 U.S. personnel, with a wide range of new assets deployed under Obama including American ballistic missile interceptors in Korea from 2016 as Seoul came under considerable pressure to distance itself from Beijing and align more closely with Western interests.[126] To China's south significant efforts were made to bring India into the Western sphere of influence including through the Quad security forum uniting it with Japan, the United States and Australia. Quad members held joint exercises widely seen as aimed at China, while the forum's white papers called for attacks on Chinese sea cables and other assets to be made part of joint drills.[127] India nevertheless resisted full integration into Western influence, notable examples being resisting U.S. efforts to threaten it with sanctions if it failed to loosen defence and economic ties with Russia, and allowing Chinese telecoms giant Huawei to build 5G infrastructure despite tremendous Western pressure not to.[128] To the west Beijing strengthened partnerships with former Soviet states across Central Asia, and following the withdrawal of Western forces in 2021 also bolstered ties with Afghanistan.[129] This succeeded despite frequent reports that Western powers were seeking to intervene in political processes and engineer changes in government across the region to bring anti-China political figures to power.[130] To China's north ties with Russia proved the most difficult to derail despite widespread calls in the West to prioritize doing so,[131] with economic integration and trade volumes between them increasing drastically from the turn of the century alongside strategic ties.[132]

China's fifth frontier, and the one with likely the greatest economic potential, was Southeast Asia where limiting Chinese influence was a cornerstone of Western containment efforts. As a result the South China Sea connecting China to Southeast Asia quickly became a focal point of military tensions following the Obama administration's initiation of the Pivot to Asia. The primary pretext for increased Western involvement in the region from the 2010s was to resolve longstanding territorial disputes

between China – both the Taipei-based Republic of China and the internationally recognized Beijing-based People's Republic – and Southeast Asian states. A series of minor atolls were at the centre of this dispute including the main island groups the Spratlys, Paracels and Scarborough Shoal, which are disputed by China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei. While of negligible size themselves, these islands would grant whichever state controlled them access to both ludicrous fishing grounds and a seabed containing fossil fuels under the Law of the Sea. Sovereignty over them was thus hotly contested, with resources being a particularly major boon for the smaller economies of the Southeast Asian states should they be acquired.

For Beijing the value of these territories lay primarily in their strategic defensive value, as they lie adjacent to some of the world's busiest maritime trade routes which it became vital to secure after Pentagon plans published in 2013 threatened to cut them.[133] With plans drafted in the U.S. to directly blockade Chinese access to the sea, the threat only grew more serious.[134] This would hardly be unprecedented, with Western navies having seized ships from North Korea, Iran and Russia in international waters without legal basis on multiple occasions and in some cases even appropriated and sold on their cargo or the ships themselves.[135] Papers from the U.S. Naval Institute were among those to suggest that should tensions rise further the U.S. should consider targeting Chinese merchant shipping in international waters, possibly using mercenary privateers to do so, leveraging the fact that China had a much larger merchant fleet and a much smaller overseas naval presence. A highly illegal proposition, albeit no more so than the seizures of other countries' shipping already perpetrated, this remained very possible should tensions increase.[136]

China's longstanding claims to territories in the South China Sea were supported by extensive historical documentation, much of which dates back to the Han dynasty over 1,800 years ago. These claims were recognized after the Second World War by the Allied Powers in 1945 and were to be restored to Guomindang China after being seized by Japan. The Guomindang's defeat, however, led to China's exclusion from the 1951 San Francisco peace conference which finalized the details of the peace treaty with Japan, meaning Chinese territories were not included in the final

document. Japan's treaty, signed the following year with the Taipei-based Guomidang-run Republic of China, noted that Tokyo renounced all claims to the South China Sea islands. Had the Guomindang won the civil war and China been under the rule of the Western-aligned government, Chinese claims in the South China Sea – which in the 2010s were strongly criticized in the West as threats to regional stability – would have been recognized.

So long as the United States recognized the Guomindang-led and Western-aligned Republic of China based in Taipei as the legitimate Chinese government, the South China Sea islands were considered to be Chinese territory. From 1950 until 1979 when the United States Navy continued to apply for permission from Taipei to carry out mapping and nautical surveys off the islands as if it were Chinese territory, showing a recognition of a Chinese claim.[137] It subsequently suited Western interests, however, to withdraw recognition as China became synonymous with the Beijing-based People's Republic. This mirrored the situation regarding the ROC and PRC's claims to Tibet, with those of the Western client state Guomindang China being recognized while identical claims by the People's Republic were made cause for major conflict (see Chapter 3). Taipei's continuing claims in the South China Sea are based on the same evidence as those of Beijing.

In the 1980s Beijing took extensive measures to prevent territorial disputes from harming relations with Southeast Asian partners and avoided asserting its claims too strongly. Chairman Deng Xiaoping proposed that such disputes be shelved and settled by "wisdom of future generations," assuring Philippine President Corazon Aquino in 1988: "We can set aside this issue for the time being and take the approach of pursuing joint development." Deng underlined the importance of not letting "this issue stand in the way of China's friendship with the Philippines and other countries."[138] The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has also taken measures to prevent tensions arising from territorial disputes through the establishment of the mutual Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DCPSCS) signed by ASEAN members and China in 2002. It laid out a consensual framework agreed to by all parties on how to proceed with seabed exploration and infrastructure development in disputed areas. Between the mediating role of ASEAN and China's restraint

and prioritization of bilateral relations over asserting territorial claims, disputes were long considered a dormant issue in a region which was growing increasingly economically interdependent. The violation of DCPSCS by some Southeast Asian parties did increase tensions, but such issues tended to be resolved regionally through ASEAN.

Re-stoking territorial disputes provided an ideal pretext for U.S. intervention in line with the Obama administration's goals, and while Washington claimed the role of a mediator its policy reflected a hard-line anti-Chinese position and a goal of alienating China from ASEAN.[139] Bringing ASEAN states into an American-led consortium to formally and unilaterally declare Chinese activities to protect its claims in the South China Sea a threat to regional stability was a major objective,[140] with regional initiatives towards an independent ASEAN-Chinese brokered agreement stalling or breaking down altogether.[141]

As the ASEAN state most closely aligned with Washington (see Chapter 5) the Philippines played a key role in sparking tensions when the United States needed them to justify its Pivot to Asia. Speaking in Hanoi in July 2010 U.S. State Secretary Hillary Clinton, a key architect of the Asia Pivot, declared for the first time that the South China Sea was a sphere of U.S. national interest and pledged greater American involvement in resolving territorial disputes. These disputes had until then been of negligible importance even within the region, let alone internationally, which made their mention highly surprising. As if on cue, as some analysts later speculated, the government in Manila almost immediately seriously violated DCPSCS and existing ASEAN agreements which had long kept tensions to a minimum and unilaterally invited foreign firms to drill for oil in disputed waters which it claimed.[142] This gave the U.S. exactly the pretext it needed to involve itself.

In response to Manilla's actions China began to station a permanent garrison on the disputed Scarborough Shoal, which violated ASEAN agreements and the spirit of Chairman Deng's calls to avoid tensions – but by then these had already been violated by the Philippines and were deemed by Beijing to be a necessary response. Similarly, although the construction of airstrips on disputed islands and their militarization went against regional agreements China began to construct airstrips on islands under its

control as well as building numerous artificial islands on disputed reefs. Construction of airstrips had years before been done by Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines on Taiping, the Swallow Reef, the Spratly Islands and Thitu, respectively, and it was only after the Pivot to Asia began to be implemented that China began to do so. As Beijing officially claimed in 2015: "We have simply repeated what everyone else is doing."[143] China's construction and militarization of artificial islands on disputed territories was not in response to other regional powers doing the same, but rather responded to America's growing military presence threatening Chinese trade routes. The fact that other claimants had previously done so, however, did much to legitimize China's actions. U.S. war plans in the early 2010s began to increasingly refer to the importance of 'offshore control' – the ability to blockade China's trade in both the South China Sea and the Malacca Strait to cripple its economy.[144] In 2017 State Secretary Rex Tillerson would further raise the possibility of deploying the U.S. Navy to waters claimed by China to unilaterally blockade its access to the islands it claimed.[145]

American warships and nuclear-capable bombers carried out increasingly provocative manoeuvres near Chinese controlled islands with growing frequency, with bombers ordered to ignore warnings from Chinese ground controllers.[146] The Chinese Foreign Ministry referred to such manoeuvres in 2015 as having "threatened China's sovereignty and security interests, jeopardized the safety of personnel and facilities on the reefs, and damaged regional peace and stability."[147] The Commander of U.S. Pacific Air Forces General Lori Robinson was one of many who called on other countries to conduct such manoeuvres in Chinese-claimed waters, stating: "We would encourage all nations in the region to do just that, just as the United States is doing."[148]

Although America's Western allies were highly receptive, such calls received at best a lukewarm reception from ASEAN states which proved highly reluctant to actively deploy forces as part of the American initiatives targeting Beijing.[149] East Asia as a whole had only to lose from raising tensions over minor territorial disputes, which resulted in most cases in Chinese and ASEAN efforts to mitigate tensions and not assert claims too forcefully. The United States by contrast benefitted from making tensions a major international issue to the detriment of the interests of all regional

powers to alienate China from other claimants, diminish co-operation in a region long seen as an economic challenge to Western primacy, and provide a pretext for Western military involvement. As Chinese President Xi Jinping observed regarding how the Western 'military first' approach was at odds with regional interests: "What the Asia-Pacific countries care about most is to maintain economic prosperity and build on the momentum of economic growth and regional cooperation. At a time when people long for peace, stability and development, to deliberately give prominence to the military security agenda, scale up military deployment and strengthen military alliances is not really what most countries in the region hope to see."[150] Among multiple statements from government sources to this effect, Chinese state news agency *Xinhua* similarly commented: "There's no need for countries outside the region to forcibly dictate how affairs should be managed in the South China Sea. That should be left to the countries of East and Southeast Asia." It warned that the West threatened to bring chaos to East Asia as it had to the Middle East before it.[151]

Efforts to alienate China from Southeast Asia, although raising tensions over territorial disputes in the 2010s, ultimately failed as economic ties continued to improve and the discrepancy between China's economic importance to the region and that of the United States only increased. A key indicator from the late 2010s of the state a country's relations with China, and the degree of U.S. influence over its policy, was the use of 5G equipment from the Chinese telecoms giant Huawei – the restriction of which became a leading goal of U.S. foreign policy from 2019. American efforts to deny Huawei 5G contracts internationally were in part motivated by the need to undercut the revenues of the Chinese firm and expand those of its Western competitors, but also intended to ensure that telecommunications infrastructure across the world could be used by the U.S. Military in its global operations.[152] Partnerships with Huawei also made networks of the countries using it much more difficult to penetrate for Western intelligence agencies.[153]

Southeast Asia proved among the most resilient regions to U.S. and Western pressure, with experts widely observing it remained "a corner of the globe where the U.S. has already lost its propaganda war" by failing to vilify Huawei[154] as even longstanding Western partners such as Indonesia[155]

and the Philippines adopted its infrastructure at the centre of their telecoms networks.[156] As Singaporean correspondent Bhavan Jaipragas observed in 2019 ASEAN had "shrugged off the West's concerns" while Huawei was "widely lauded for being far ahead of Western competitors in developing 5G."[157] Broader Western efforts to press Southeast Asian countries to reduce ties with Chinese firms were similarly largely ignored,[158] which was likely just a first sign of broader trends in China-ASEAN relations as states in the latter became increasingly immune to Western interference.

A Broader Western Military Pivot to Asia: Can Europe Make an Impact?

The Pivot to Asia aligned not only with the interests of the United States, but also the broader interests of the Western world in maintaining the centuries-long Western-dominated balance of power in what is arguably the world's most strategically critical region. Sustaining a regional order in East Asia premised on Western dominance tremendously enriched not only the United States, but the Western world more broadly for centuries. Taking China as an example of a source of enrichment in the colonial era, unequal treaties were imposed not only by the United States but also by France, Germany, Italy, Britain, Sweden, Norway, Portugal, Austria, Hungary, the Netherlands and Spain. These granted their citizens extreme privileges in the country and immunity from the rule of law, while Europe extracted very considerable wealth and its living standards benefitted immeasurably from its the colonial order imposed at East Asia's expense. This remained the case as direct Western rule ended during the Cold War and the Western dominance was instead sustained through a neo-colonial order, giving not only Washington but other Western powers as well major stakes in sustaining the status quo of Western hegemony. Thus following Washington's lead other Western powers increasingly began deploying military forces to East Asia.

British Defence Secretary Michael Fallon attested to a broader Western interest in the Pivot to Asia to respond to "the emergence of China as a global power," stating in 2012 that "the European NATO powers should welcome the fact that the U.S. is willing to engage in this new strategic challenge on behalf of the alliance."[159] Britain led Europe in pledging further military involvement in East Asia, and in 2015 announced plans to double the number of personnel involved in war games in Malaysia.[160] Royal Marines were in 2016 deployed to Japan for the first time in decades,[161] and in October that year Royal Air Force made an unprecedented deployment of its Typhoon fighter jets to Japan – referred to by an officer as "probably the most ambitious deployment that the Air Force has done to the Far East." Tensions with China and preparation to participate in possible attacks on North Korea were the stated reasons for this deployment.[162] In December the British envoy to the United States pledged that his country would increase its military presence in the South China Sea including aircraft carrier deployments,[163] which was later reiterated by Foreign Minister Boris Johnson.[164] Britain also increasingly took a leading role in military drills including simulated assassination of North Korea's leadership by airstrike.[165] Sources from senior Royal Navy leadership figures the following year indicated Britain was willing to provide whatever support it could to a potential American attack on North Korea should Washington initiate a war.[166] The Navy subsequently took a leading role in patrolling near the Korean Peninsula to monitor North Korean shipping alongside assets from Australia, New Zealand and Japan.[167]

France[v] also moved to escalate its military involvement in East Asia, with Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian emphasizing that it was in the

v China's rise also challenged French interests its sphere of influence in former West African colonies, on which France's economy remained heavily reliant, with growing Sino-West African political and economic ties perceived as threats to French hegemony. France's extreme reliance on its position in the region was attested to by former president Jacques Chirac, who said in reference to Francophone West Africa: "Without Africa, France will slide down into the rank of a third world power." His predecessor, Francois Mitterrand, similarly stated in the context of the same issue: "Without Africa, France will have no history in the 21st century." Former French Foreign Minister Jacques Godfrain stated to similar effect: "A little country [France], with a small amount of strength, we can move a planet because

common European interest to support the Asia Pivot and deploy forces for "regular and visible" patrols of waters claimed by China.[168] France's Pacific colonial territories of New Caledonia and French Polynesia were contributed to the effort,[169] while the French Navy deployed assault ships to lead drills with Japan, the U.S. and Britain in 2017 simulating amphibious landings to capture enemy territory. There was little doubt in media from any side that these were conducted with attacks on China in mind.[170]

In 2016 the Obama administration seriously considered launching unprovoked and illegal attacks on North Korea, although the lack of intelligence on the locations of the Korean leadership or country's significant retaliatory strategic assets were reportedly key to deterring this.[171] From that year personnel from Britain, France, Italy, Denmark, Australia, Canada and New Zealand took part in massive U.S.-led military drills in South Korea, which practiced the invasion of North Korea, decapitation of its leadership and attacks on major cities.[172] NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the time stressed the importance of Western involvement in Korea,[173] with European participation expected to grow.[174] Exercises saw forces practice operations on the Russian and Chinese borders, with "special operations forces being deployed to border areas adjacent to China and Russia."[175] As China's treaty ally, and with Russia drawing a red line against Western attacks on its neighbour, a Western attack on North Korea risked drawing both into a war.[176] For both Beijing and Moscow, the massing of Western coalition forces preparing for offensive operations near their borders was highly reminiscent of historical Western invasions which had devastated both countries and remained key influences on their historical memories.

In November 2019 U.S. State Secretary Mike Pompeo stated that NATO's new goal needed to be confronting China, which he stressed had

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[of our] relations with 15 or 20 African countries." French involvement in East Asia against China may well have been partly in response. (Spagnol, Giorgio, 'Is France Still Exploiting Africa,' *Institut Européе Des Relations Internationales Academia Diplomatica Europaea*, February 10, 2019.) (Marchesin, Philippe, *Mitterand l'Africain,* Universite de Paris (http://www.politique-africaine.com/numeros/pdf/058005.pdf).) (Leymarie, Philippe, 'Manière de voir,' n°79, février-mars, 2008.) (Costantinos, BT Costantinos, 'Devolutionary Political Dynamics of the Crisis in the Central African Republic' (lecture), African Union Summit, 2014.)

replaced the USSR as the greatest challenge to Western power.[177] This was followed by a statement by NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg in March 2022 indicating that the alliance would reorient itself towards countering China and strengthen both its involvement in East Asia and its ties with partners in the region, referring to Beijing's growing power as a "systematic challenge."[178] British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss the following month called for a 'Global NATO' capable of arming Taiwan and countering China in East Asia, stressing that the Western alliance's focus on Europe was no longer sufficient.[179]

The year 2019 saw a growing trend towards NATO member states other than the U.S., namely Canada, Britain and France, sailing warships through the Taiwan Strait which was interpreted as challenging China in its most sensitive hotspot for potential conflict.[180] Germany caught up with prevailing trends and began to send warships to the South China Sea in December 2021, with calls in Berlin to also sail through the Taiwan Strait.[181] While Taiwan was recognized by its own constitution, by the United Nations and without exception by every UN member state as a part of China, a number of European states took a lead in supporting Taiwanese separatist forces seeking to alter this status to Beijing's detriment by signalling the beginnings of recognition of Taiwan as a separate country. The Czech Republic and Lithuania took the lead in this in 2020 and 2021.[182]

European military involvement in East Asia notably came despite crises in the continent's major militaries far exceeding that of the U.S., which left their ability to significantly impact the balance of power highly questionable. Taking Britain as an example, its armed forces faced deep budget cuts[183] as a result of its severe economic difficulties which forced the termination of key programs,[184] with the Navy in particular facing sharp quantitative and qualitative decline.[185] Britain fielded just six destroyers in total – where China in the late 2010s was launching six to ten per year – and these remained well behind these performance of American, Chinese, South Korean or Japanese designs with half or less of the firepower and consistent crippling reliability issues. In 2017, for example, 75 percent of Royal Navy ships fell into disrepair due to lack of funds for maintenance,[186] with British warships breaking down at sea at a very high rate[187] and struggling with even basic disaster relief exercises in British overseas

territories.[vi] Global power projection aspirations aside, the Royal Navy's ability to perform the most essential task – patrolling Britain's own territorial waters – was itself called to serious question.[188]

A 2016 Parliamentary Defence Committee report stated that the Royal Navy was "way below the critical mass required for the many tasks which could confront it" with an "already pathetically low" fleet size,[189] while the National Audit Office reported crumbling military infrastructure due to lack of investment.[190] The Army fared little better and continued to see deep cuts to all areas as part of a severe decades-long decline.[191] As the second most indebted country in the world,[192] the fact that Britain prioritized deployments to East Asia so highly despite its severe military and economic decline indicated the importance attributed to the region. Britain's military decline reflected broader trends across Western Europe which in other countries was even more severe.

European militaries repeatedly demonstrated staggering inefficiencies, notably including in 2011 during their assault on Libya when the United States was forced to intervene on their behalf to an extent it had not previously intended.[193] Running out of ammunition or spare parts despite encountering negligible Libyan resistance was a major issue for most participating European militaries shedding light as to just how out of their depth they would be in East Asia.[194] A 2017 RAND report highlighted that France, Britain and Germany between them could mobilize just one armoured battalion within a week – and fewer than three armoured brigades in a month,[195] while in 2018 it emerged that NATO could field just a single constant maritime patrol aircraft over the North Atlantic. This

vi The First Sea Lord Alan West referred to a "hollowing out of defence" due to austerity leaving an underwhelming capability, with his successor Sir George Zambellas similarly warning in 2017 that Britain was set to "disappear into a Third World nation, security-wise" as a result of steep cuts to its already inadequate defence budget. He referred to the Royal Navy as the "bottom of the efficiency barrel" – noting the service's struggle to accomplish simple tasks such as humanitarian missions to hurricane victims. ('Cuts have left the Navy "struggling to protect British citizens" with three quarters warships out of action,' *The Sun*, September 15, 2017.) ('Britain will have "3rd World" navy if budget is cut, says ex-first sea lord,' *RT*, September 18, 2017.)

reflected broader issues with how small and unprepared European forces had become well below the standards needed to have an impact in East Asia.

Europe's lack of several critical high end military capabilities, and its preoccupation with countering challengers to Western hegemony in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, combined with negligible growth and mounting debts, made funding operations in the Pacific difficult despite its tremendous importance. Writing for the *National Interest*, Senior Fellow at Defence Priorities Gil Barndollar observed regarding non-U.S. NATO members: "NATO's navies are not up to the task... NATO has also repeatedly shown that it doesn't do 'out of area' missions well." Highlighting the entirely underwhelming performance or staying power in Libya as an example, he added that in Afghanistan "contingents were hamstrung by risk aversion and national caveats that prevented them from accomplishing much." He noted the example of inept Italian forces bribing the Taliban not to fight them.[196]

Whether it was a calculation error that ruined a $2 billion Spanish submarine program,[197] a leaking new British aircraft carrier which could only spend 8 percent of its time at sea,[198] or German forces forced to run and pretend they were driving tanks or trucks due to shortages,[199] issues in European militaries were well above anything seen in the U.S. or Northeast Asia. German pilots losing licenses due to lack of flight hours, operational rates of under 33 percent, missing ammunition and war plane shortages,[200] a British nuclear weapons program £1.75 billion over budget and much delayed,[201] and the fact that European fighters outside France were forty years behind the Soviet Union and 20 years behind the U.S. and Japan in beginning to adopt electronically scanned array radars, all pointed to the same trend. Other examples, such as Britain's heavy reliance on underage recruits and issues of high illiteracy rates, with almost 40 percent of recruits having a reading age of 11,[202] were numerous. The state of the continent's militaries and defence industries were very far from impressive, and their ability to make a meaningful difference in the very top league with China, the U.S. and Japan was limited.

U.S. Power Projection and Offshore Blockade

While China and the United States are effectively in a league of their own in the size of their defence sectors and the scale of research and development they conduct, the orientation of both countries' armed forces differ greatly with the former focused on security in East Asia while the latter prioritizes a global reach to project power to any corner of the globe. Thus while China would very likely prevail if facing the U.S. in the western pacific, America's ability to fight in the open oceans and against faraway countries is unmatched and entirely unique. Notable assets which facilitate this include eleven nuclear-powered supercarriers, which have no equivalent in any other navy, as well as nine assault carriers, and over 450 tankers for aerial refuelling where China fields just 21.[203] These assets are all critical for long-range offensive air operations particularly over the vast waters of the Pacific as almost all American combat jets were built with the shorter distances of Cold War Europe in mind. Another notable indicator of a military's orientation is the proportion of logistical support assets to combat ones, with offensive and power projection oriented forces needing more logistical assets to fight wars further away. Reservists in Western militaries are primarily geared towards providing additional logistical support, rather than serving as extra combat personnel, due to the far greater strain placed on logistics by offensive operations overseas.

Chinese acquisitions have overwhelmingly been defensive, with even its aircraft carriers being conventionally powered, lacking carrier onboard delivery aircraft, and not well suited to extended operations beyond the Western Pacific. As observed by Professor of Strategy at and founding member of the U.S. Naval War College's China Maritime Studies Institute, Dr Andrew S. Erickson, regarding China's neglect of offensively oriented power projection assets:

> *China's Navy is not poised to speed across the Pacific to threaten America... Such statements lack basis in fact and present an ideal strategic teaching moment to remind analysts and policymakers that Beijing's evolving naval structure and operations yet again show that China is not working off a traditional European, Soviet or American naval development playbook [all powers which invested heavily in projecting power away from*

their shores]. Even its most ambitious strategists and decision-makers do not seek what they would term a 'global Far Oceans blue-water type' navy any time soon.[204]

Comparing the power projection capabilities of the military powers active in East Asia provides strong indications as to which parties do pose a risk of aggression, with East Asian militaries with the exception of Singapore all heavily defensively oriented while those of Western powers intervening in the region are primarily offensively oriented. The discrepancy between offensive power projection oriented forces built to fight far away, and defensive ones, thus not only distinguishes China from the United States, but more broadly separates East Asian countries from Western ones with even very small Western militaries such as Belgium, Canada or Denmark heavily invested in power projection.

The United States is currently the only military power in the Pacific with the assets required for major power projection operations against well-defended faraway targets, and although several European militaries have similar offensive orientations, their overall capabilities are considerably poorer. Without the United States' unique offensive capabilities prospects for a major war in East Asia would be very significantly lower, with no regional power coming close to its level of preparedness to benefit from a war of aggression. China by contrast, although highly capable of defending its airspace and waters and benefitting from a growing number of military technological advantages, would struggle to mount an offensive across the East China Sea against neighbouring Japan – let alone further afield.

Another key facilitator of power projection capabilities, that of strategically located military facilities, similarly demonstrates a unique American offensive capability. As the American *Nation* reported, "while there are no freestanding foreign bases permanently located in the United States, there are now around 800 U.S. bases in foreign countries… there are still 174 U.S. 'base sites' in Germany, 113 in Japan, and 83 in South Korea, according to the Pentagon. Hundreds more dot the planet in around 80 countries." It concluded: "Although few Americans realize it, the United States likely has more bases in foreign lands than any other people, nation, or empire in history."[205] 95 percent of foreign military installations globally are American, with the majority of the remaining 5 percent belonging to allied Western powers, which play a vital role in allowing America to launch

wars globally. U.S. Special Forces are deployed even more widely, and in 2016 alone were deployed to 138 countries the only major exceptions being China, Russia, North Korea, Iran and South Africa.[206] This global reach is a key asset directed largely against states which have sought to undermine the Western-dominated world order.

In the Pacific a chain of bases from the U.S. mainland to Hawaii, Guam, Wake Island, the Philippines, Okinawa, Singapore and on to Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean forms the backbone of America's power projection infrastructure. With military facilities across all of China's maritime trade routes, the potential was increasingly raised in the early years of the Pivot to Asia to leverage these to control China's seaborne energy supply chain. By far the busiest and most strategically important strait in the world, control of the Malacca Strait between Singapore and Malaysia had for centuries been prized by Western empires and in the 2010s carried over 60 percent of all petroleum traded by sea,[207] including 80 percent of China's crude oil imports.[208] The strait first fell under Western control in the early sixteenth century, taken by Portugal in 1511 followed by the Netherlands from 1641-1825 and Britain afterwards which held it until evicted by Japanese forces.[vii]

The U.S. Military's Air Sea Battle plan for a war in the Pacific, which became highly prominent in the initial years of the Asia Pivot, emphasized the importance of 'distant blockade operations' targeting the Malacca Strait to devastate Chinese trade and cut off its access to fossil fuels. Blockading Malacca would capitalize on the American advantage in power projection capabilities, while avoiding the need to confront Chinese defensively oriented forces directly or operate anywhere near Chinese waters. Leading American strategists such as T. X. Hammes, a research fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies, strongly advocated a distant blockade as

vii This came as part of a broader trend under which control of strategic points such as the Malacca Strait needed to dominate East Asia's maritime trade routes was passed down from one Western power to the other - from Portuguese Navy control in the sixteenth century to the U.S. Navy in the twenty-first. Assertion of Portuguese dominance was thus described by Australian professor Coral Bell as beginning "500 years of ascendancy of the West over Asia," with the mantle of the leading Western hegemon first taken by Portugal and ending with the United States. (Ayson, Robert, *Asia's Security*, New York, Palgrave, 2015 (p. 35).)

an effective and relatively low risk offensive strategy.[209] The U.S. Military took measures to increase its presence in Singapore, constructing facilities to host aircraft carriers which began to deploy frequently and permanently deploying Littoral Combat Ships there from 2016.[210] Britain, too, maintained a presence in Singapore, Malaysia and in nearby Brunei. U.S. military planners referred to Malacca as "where we'd get them" – in reference to Western control over China's maritime trade routes being a key and outstanding weakness.[211] The lesser straits of Sunda, Lombok and Makassar were also highly vulnerable to Western blockade.

Following the announcement of the Pivot to Asia, and as exercises involving the U.S. Military in the region rapidly increased, many of these simulated blockades of Chinese trade routes. In September 2014 U.S. forces staged the Valiant Shield exercises in the Western pacific involving 18,000 personnel to test the Pentagon's Air-Sea battle concept. Under this, first China's "communications in space and cyberspace" would be blinded, before destroying land and sea weapons systems, command centres, radar installations and satellites. In July 2015 the United States, Australia, Japan and New Zealand staged the two-week Talisman Sabre exercises simulating blocking the Strait of Malacca, the Lombok Strait and other vital sea-lanes to cut off China's access to oil, gas and raw materials. Elaborating on the purpose of the drills, Australian Senator Scott Ludlam stated regarding the seemingly highly offensive simulated mass landings involving 30,000 personnel: "It's about landing on beaches and invading other people's countries... preparing for a war with China."[212] The Australian, Philippine and U.S. navies the following year launched large scale exercises involving amphibious landings and the capture of oil and gas extraction facilities, with U.S. Marine Pacific Commander Lieutenant General John Toolan commenting that they "absolutely" were training and preparation for a potential crisis involving China.[213] These were but a few of the offensive drills which took place as Pivot to Asia began to be materialize.

As American strategists advocated offshore blockade, Western powers' ability to dominate the skies and seas surrounding key trade routes was increasingly seen as an imminent threat to Chinese security. As professors of strategy at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes, noted: "Chinese leaders fret that the United States

will deploy naval might to deny China access to the commons, retaliating against some Chinese transgression or even conceivably on the whim of an American president."[214] One response was to diversify energy supplies and establish alternative trade routes, including signing oil and gas deals with Russia and Kazakhstan worth hundreds of billions of dollars and funding the construction of pipelines to facilitate them. Substantial investments in improving transportation infrastructure on the Asian continent, from the One Belt One Road Initiative through Central Asia to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, were also key. The development of Gwadar Port in Balochistan, southern Pakistan, and provision of support to strengthen the Pakistani Navy, would reduce reliance on Malacca. Construction of a pipeline infrastructure in Myanmar was similarly intended to allow China to import Middle Eastern oil while circumventing a Western blockade.[215]

Complementing these efforts, the Chinese government went to significant lengths to reduce its reliance on energy imports. This included testing the world's first Thorium-fuelled molten nuclear salt reactor,[216] investing heavily in developing the world's first nuclear fusion reactor,[217] construction of new more advanced fission reactors,[218] consistent surpassing of state targets for solar power generation,[219] and massive investments in hydroelectric power leading China to have five of the world's ten largest plants.[220] China's pioneering of new developments in solar energy made it the first from 2020 to generate solar power more cheaply than power from fossil fuels.[221]

Rapidly electrifying transport further reduced reliance on oil imports and allowed China to capitalize on the benefits of fast-growing generation capacity from renewables and nuclear power. This ranged from increasing quotas for electric cars with a very significant lead over the world in productive capacity,[222] rapid adoption of electric busses – again leading the world,[223] and developing of a high speed electric railway network far larger than those of the rest of the world combined which significantly reduced demand for air travel.[224] It also became the leader in development of hydrogen powered busses,[225] and rapidly expanded underground electric rail networks to reduce the need for private cars.[226] From electric car adoption alone, *Reuters* noted citing a 2020 study by the climate think tank Carbon Tracker: "An aggressive China-led shift to electric vehicles is

expected to slash global oil demand growth by 70 percent by 2030 and will help bring an end to the 'oil era.'"[227] The report projected that China could save more than $80 billion annually in oil import costs within a decade based on conservative projections. As Carbon Tracker strategist Kingsmill Bond noted: "This is a simple choice between growing dependency on what has been expensive oil produced by a foreign cartel, or domestic electricity produced by renewable sources whose prices fall over time."[228] Thus unlike Imperial Japan, which was forced into war primarily by an oil embargo, China was increasingly immune to such escalation should the Western powers proceed with it.

Ultimately conflict for the future of East Asia is likely to be determined heavily by technological factors, with China's emergence as a peer level technological power with a greater and much faster growing scale of research and development and the world's largest economy allowing it to very seriously challenge Western primacy. It has also presented an attractive partner even to traditional Western clients. A growing trend towards Chinese technological parity or primacy in a range of key fields has increasingly translated into greater self-sufficiency in a growing number of areas ranging from energy to electronics, combat aircraft, infrastructure and food. Should economic and technological trends towards a fast-growing Chinese advantage continue into the 2030s, even longstanding Western clients such as South Korea and Thailand could increasingly be pulled out of the Western sphere of influence. While power trajectories continue to favour Chinese interests, however, maintaining credible deterrents to potential Western efforts to change this, whether it be a strong fleet of stealth fighters to deter military action or deep economic interdependence to prevent economic warfare, remain key to securing both China's future and that of the wider region.

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